KASHMIR

ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Kashmir

Its Cultural Heritage

Renowned as the Happy Valley, Kashmir has been for centuries the fountainhead of art and culture in the East. At the cross-roads of the ancient caravan routes in Central Asia, Kashmir has been the meeting point of various cultures. In her spacious valleys, she has harmoniously blended their myriad trends to produce a civilisation distinctive of her people and her heritage. But Kashmir is more than a civilisation. She is an answer to man's eternal craving for scenic beauty.

Since the early dawn of history, innumerable people—conquerors and missionaries—came and settled down in Kashmir, taking her for their adopted homeland. They came individually and in waves: the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Huns, the Muslims, the Mughals, the Pathans, the Sikhs and the Dogras. Like an ocean, Kashmir has received the tribute of a thousand rivers; and like an ocean again, though perturbed for a while on the surface, she has absorbed

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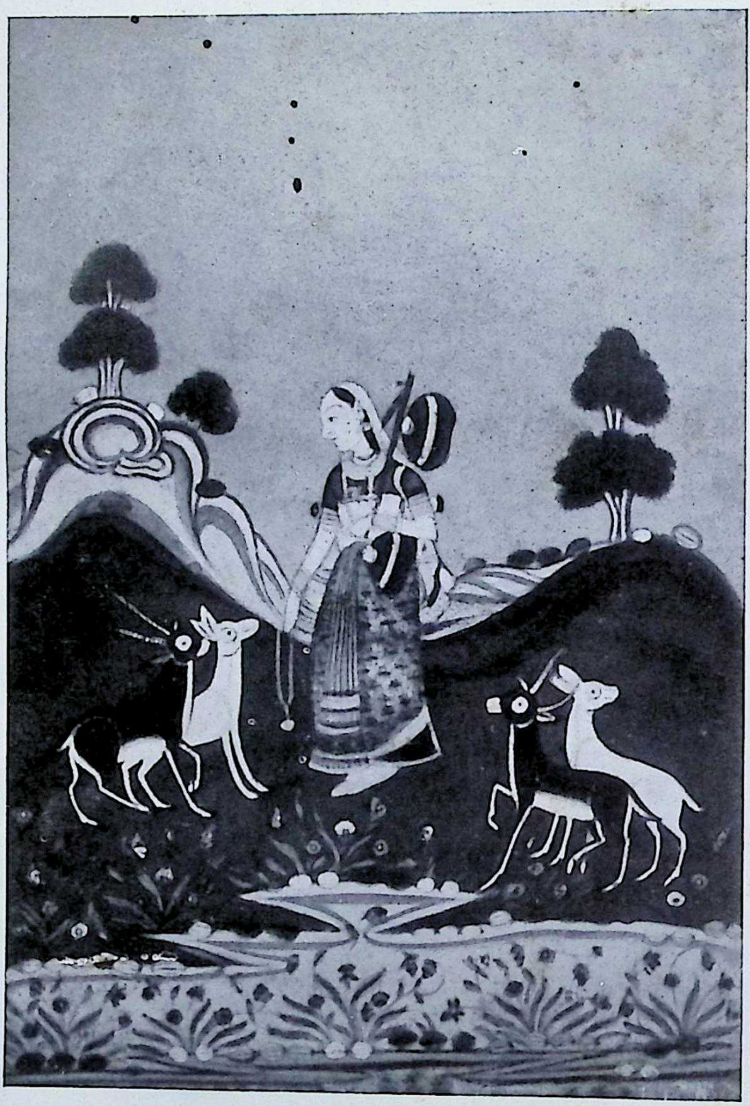

TODI RAGINI
A late 18th century painting

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Dedicated
To
A Friend

PREFACE

RENOWNED as the Happy Valley, Kashmir has been for centuries the fountainhead of art and culture in the East. At the cross-roads of the ancient caravan routes in Central Asia, Kashmir has been the meeting point of various cultures. In her spacious valleys, she has harmoniously blended their myriad trends to produce a civilisation distinctive of her people and her heritage. But Kashmir is more than a civilisation. She is an answer to man's eternal craving for scenic beauty.

It was my great good fortune to have spent several summers in the early years of my life in this picturesque Valley, when I had ample opportunities of trekking far and wide into the interior. This developed in me a deep love and admiration for the lovelier and the happier side of life there. These memories of the early impressionable days were later strengthened by a somewhat detailed and systematic study of Kashmir in all its various phases. This book is an outcome of my admiration and study.

The book aims at presenting the lay-reader with a vivid story of Kashmir's "achievements" in the spheres of art, learning and literature. From Kashmir's arts, her handicrafts, her traditional lore, her music, her customs and her ideas, I have attempted to seek the pattern of her artistic and cultural heritage.

At a time when the question regarding the accession of Kashmir to one of the neighbouring countries has assumed an international significance, this cultural aspect of the Kashmir story should not be allowed to go by default. This little book is an attempt to fill in the gap. If, therefore, by a perusal of this book, the reader is enabled to appreciate and grasp the brighter side of life in this beautiful Valley, I shall feel my labours to have been fully rewarded.

Before I close, I take the opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Mr. M. Chalapathi Rau, the reputed Editor of the *National Herald* of Lucknow, for permitting me to make use of material from some of my articles on Kashmir published earlier in his newspaper. I also wish to thank all those friends and well-wishers who inspired and assisted me in completing this little work.

KAUMUDI

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1

A HAPPY MINGLING

KASHMIR is a dream of beauty and delight set in the heart of the Himalayas. Its snow-capped peaks and sparkling streams, vast valleys rich with fruit and verdure, and limpid lakes of crystal blue waters combine to make this land, in the words of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, truly a "Paradise on Earth". "Kashmir," exclaimed Jehangir, "is the paradise of which priests have prophesied and poets have sung".

Kashmir is to the Himalayas what Switzerland is to the Alps. Kashmir's is a beauty sublime and idyllic—untouched and unspoilt by the hand of man. Kashmir, in addition, shows in its background a range of mountains, surpassing in height and majesty any other range in the world.

The high plain through which the Jhelum flows forms the main Valley of Kashmir—extending over 80 miles in length and 25 miles in breadth, with an average height of 5,000 ft. to 6,000 ft. above the sea level.

The oval plain, surrounded thus by an unbroken ring of the mountain-ranges of the Karakoram and the Himalayas—the highest of which is the mighty Nanga Parbat (26,620 ft.) standing erect in the north of the Wular Lake, and the fifth highest peak in the world, with the other awe-inspiring and hoary-headed mountains of Amarnath (17,320 ft.) and Harmukh (16,900 ft.), frowning below on the Gangabal Lake, on the south the Pir Panjal ranges (15,000 ft.) and on the west Kazi Nag (12,125 ft.), remains encircled by a slivery ring of perennial snows.

The climate of Kashmir is varied and differs from place to place. It varies between the invigorating cold of the Alpine snows in the hills and the mellow summer warmth of places in the plains like Srinagar. The Valley enshrines in its bosom very fertile lands. That portion of it is the richest and the most attractive which has the river Jhelum flowing through it, along with its principal tributary of the Liddar and the Sind widening itself in the Wular and other smaller lakes. The Jhelum is a navigable river for a distance of about ninety miles, from Khanabal in the north to Baramulla in the south, and forms a great highway for trade and traffic with the outside world. There is hardly another instance of so vast a valley on such a high altitude having a river passing through it for so long a distance!

A Charming People

The people of Kashmir belong mostly to the Aryan race. Tall and handsome, the Kashmiris possess a beautiful physique and a sturdy temperament. One can still find some ancient Aryan traits in the well-regulated features of Hindu Kashmiri Pandits. The Kashmiris are an intelligent and hard-working people endowed with an extraordinary artistic skill, though poverty has dampened their spirits.

To the physical charms of Kashmiri women, there is hardly any parallel. The women of Kashmir are extremely beautiful and their dress, though rather archaic and loose, can little mar the delicacy of their complexion, or the captivating appeal of their perfect and well-shaped features. Their figures are full and flawless and have been paid homage to by travellers and traders from the earliest of times. The Kashmiri feminine beauty, proverbial in the east, seldom fails to impress the aesthetic eye.

The population varies in its peculiarities according to the region it inhabits. While the Dogras from

Jammu and the southern tracts are brave and war-like people, the races of the Mongolian type inhabiting Ladakh and the Indus Valley are hard, simple and sturdy. The Galchas and the Dards inhabit Hunza and Astor. These are semi-nomadic tribes, speaking an altogether different language, which is a mixture of Sanskrit and Persian.

Character Unaltered

In spite of their regional peculiarities and political upheavals the Kashmiris have preserved their unity essentially intact. The comparative security due to the country's natural defences and "the narrowness of the geographical horizon—the Kashmiri could see his whole world from the roof of his house—are largely responsible for moulding the character of the inhabitants of the Happy Valley, a character which has remained unaltered for many centuries." Many a foreign invader was attracted to this Happy Vale, and, lured by its many charms, was invariably tempted to conquer it. "Warriors and statesmen came and went ; but there was no egress, and no wish on the part of the Kashmiris in normal times to leave their homes. The outside world was far, and from all accounts, inferior to the pleasant Valley, and at each of the gates of the Valley, were soldiers who demanded fees. So, the Kashmiris lived their self-centred life, conceited, clever, and conservative.."*

Unity of Cultures

Kashmir presents the unique picture of a land where unity transcends the innumerable varieties and diversities of race, religion, language and culture. Since the early dawn of history, innumerable people—conquerors and missionaries—have come and settled down in this country taking this soil for their adopted home. The

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* R. C. Kak : *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*

Hindus, the Buddhists, the Huns, the Muslims, the Mughals, the Pathans, the Sikhs and the Dogras—such has been the sequence of political changes in the history of Kashmir. But despite this seemingly infinite diversity of race and religion, caste and creed, Kashmir has remained essentially united and one. Socially, it is one homogeneous state and politically, a consolidated and dynamic country.

Rival creeds and divergent orders have existed here from times immemorial in a most peaceful manner. Hinduism and Buddhism flourished here side by side, and later on, when Islam came on the crest of a conquering wave, it deeply influenced in its turn, the culture and life of the people and got absorbed into it. These diverse cultures and creeds, in fact, brought out the best that was in the Kashmiris and from these diversities evolved a synthetic form of art and life, more profound than that produced by geographical isolation or political solidarity. This underlying unity has been the basic and motivating factor of Kashmir's social and cultural past.

Influences of various civilizations and cultures have happily mingled in Kashmir. Like an ocean, Kashmir received the tribute of a thousand rivers, and, like an ocean again, though perturbed for a while on the surface, it absorbed and assimilated these varied currents into its own culture, weaving out new patterns of synthesis and harmony. Elements from Hellenistic, Chinese, Iranian and Indian art and culture flowed and converged here from diverse directions and then Kashmir, in its turn, disseminated its own culture to various countries across its hilly borders. This adaptability has been the fundamental feature of Kashmir. One often marvels how deep-rooted and vital have been these unifying tendencies in Kashmir's cultural set-up, in spite of the conflicts of race, religion, caste, creed and language, which appear to the superficial eye to divide the land and its people.

2

A CHEQUERED HISTORY

KASHMIR has a long and chequered political history, in spite of the high Himalayan ranges that have encircled the Valley like a silvery girdle and protected it from foreign aggression. Dynasty after dynasty came and ruled over this fair vale of the East, only to give place to another, sometimes more avaricious than the previous one.

About the early history of Kashmir, we come across a very authentic record in the famous chronicles of Kalhana, the *Raj Tarangini*, or the "River of Kings", a work of considerable value. Kalhana's chronicles are sufficiently trustworthy and are particularly exact when dealing with the centuries nearer his own life-time. They form the only extant record of Kashmir's history from the earliest of time.

Birth of a Valley

The origin of the Valley of Kashmir is told in several romantic legends and myths. The Valley, according to some of these, was originally a mighty lake, called the Satisar or the "Lake of the Virtuous Woman", *i.e.*, Sati (also known as Parvati), the consort of Lord Shiva. On the vast expanse of this lake, goddess Parvati used to sail in her pleasure-boat, from the Harmukh mountain in the north to the Konsarnag Lake in the south. But there lived in the lake numerous *Pishachas*, *Yakshas* and *Nagas*, headed by the ferocious demon, named Jalodbhava or Jaldeo, whose patron was Brahma. These inhabited the lake, causing harm to people all around and harassing them. They killed and devoured human beings and destroyed all life on the shores, rendering the country waste. It was at the time of the seventh Manu that by chance a sage, called Prajapati Kashyapa, son of Marichi, and a grandson of Brahma, who was the lord of all the Nagas, happened to pass by the lake. When he heard from his son Nila Nag of the havoc wrought by the demon Jalodbhava, Kashyapa took a vow to deliver the people from the demon and practised penance for a thousand years and thereafter he braced himself up for a struggle with Jalodbhava. But the latter eluded him and hid under water. The gods Druhina, Upendra and Rudra then took pity on Kashyapa, and Vishnu came to his rescue. He placed his ploughshare at the foot of the mountains at Baramulla, making a hole in it, through which all the water of the lake was drained out. Jalodbhava then hid himself in low ground. Though the gods searched for him with the sun in one hand and the moon in the other, the demon baffled them. At last, the goddess Parvati or Sarika, moved by pity, appeared in the form of a *myna* or a magpie, carrying in her beak a pebble, which she threw down upon the wicked demon, killing and burying him instantaneously. This pebble grew and grew until it became the *Sarika Parbat*, a hill, which is said to be the "Hari Parbat" of today, the Olympus of the Hindus, and on this mountain stands to this day a great shrine in honour of the goddess. The land that emerged out of the lake after its water had been drained off, as a result of the penance by Kashyapa, ~~has since~~ then come to be known as *Kashyap-Mar*, or the "Abode of Kashyapa," which was later corrupted to the present-day "Kashmir".

After Jalodbhava had been crushed to death, the smaller demons also lost heart and ceased to cause much harm to the people thereafter. As a result, Prajapati Kashyapa was able to invite more and more people from the plains to come and settle down in the Valley. Men accordingly began to visit the Valley in summer, in large numbers, but they left again at the advent of winter for the drier regions of Kishtwar, leaving Kashmir to the demons. Living in the Valley in winter was extremely difficult but, by chance, an old Brahmin, who was unable to walk, had to spend his winter there. He met Nila Nag, son of Kashyapa, who came to the Brahmin's rescue. He gave to the Brahmin the *Nilamata Purana*, by the study of which the Brahmins of Kashmir were enabled to rout the demons and the Valley of Kashmir thereafter became permanently inhabited. About twenty centuries before the commencement of the Christian era, it is said that heavenly fairies and goddesses took shelter here in the form of rivers and lakes, while little kingdoms sprang up on their shores and men and rulers visited the Valley in summer months enriching and beautifying it. Such is the story of the birth of this beautiful land. And even now thousands of visitors and tourists flock to this Valley from far and near for sight-seeing and holiday.

Early History

About the early history of Kashmir all that we know is that Hindu kings ruled over the land for over four thousand years and in 2180 B.C. Raja Daya Karan became the first ruler of an established dynasty. During this long period, twenty-one dynasties came and successively occupied the throne of Kashmir.

The *Raj Tarangini* opens with the year 1184 B.C., with the reign of the mighty Gonanda, the King of Kashmir, "of which the dazzling Kailasa is the smile and the tossing Ganga the scarf." Though Kalhana begins his story with this ruler, he also refers to an earlier period of 1266 years during which nearly 52 kings had ruled but of whom no details or dates were available to him.

Amongst the Hindu kings of the earlier period of Kashmir, are a number of notable names. Asoka conquered Kashmir about the year 250 B.C. and with him Buddhism came to the Valley. It seems, as *Raj Tarangini* states, "Hinduism went side by side with Buddhism" in the reign of Asoka, for there was complete toleration towards faiths, and peace and prosperity prevailed all over his territories. The Emperor founded the first town of '*Srinagari*'—the City Royal—with its multiplicity of dwelling houses resplendent with prosperity, dedicated to the goddess Sri or Lakshmi. The town stood at Pandrethan, about three miles from the present Srinagar, in the vicinity of the Shankaracharya hill.

Asoka was succeeded by Jaluka in 200 B.C., to whom is attributed the stone temple over the Shankaracharya (originally called the "Gopa") hill. After this there is a mention of three kings—Huskha, Jushka and Kanishka.

The Buddhist kings were great builders and architects and the half-ruined monuments standing in brick and stone are a testimony to their greatness. Buddhism was supreme in Kashmir during the reign of these kings, and Buddhist *Viharas* and monasteries were built all over the land. It was during the time of Kanishka that the Third Great Council of the Buddhist Faith was convened in Kashmir. During this period, the Buddhist cult and the indigenous Shaivite philosophy existed side by side in Kashmir.

Five centuries later, Buddhism seems to have declined and disappeared from the land. When Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller (631-633 A.D.), visited Kashmir, he found a vast majority of the people to be followers of the Shaivite creed, while the few Buddhist monasteries and *Viharas* that still could be recognised as such at the time were in ruins. There is ample reason to believe, therefore, that Kashmiris were from the earliest period of history mainly Shaivite.

The White Huns

In the sixth century, about the year 528 A.D., the White Huns, under their leader Mihirkula, "who was cruel as death", stormed over Kashmir and laid waste the beautiful Valley. Mihirkula was so harsh and cruel that tyranny became the order of the day. The people of Kashmir still point to a hill on the Pir Panjal range, called the Hastivanj, where the King, to amuse himself, ordered one hundred elephants to be tumbled down from the top of the hill, enjoying their cries of agony and torture. Mihirkula is said to have laughed hardly once in his lifetime.

King Gopaditya who followed was a pleasant contrast to this tyrannical ruler of Kashmir, and he did much during his reign to raise the Brahmins to their former status, as also to advance Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy.

The Hindu Dynasties

Among the Hindu monarchs of the earlier period, King Pravarsena II (about the 7th century A.D.) is the most notable. He built his capital on the very site where the capital of Kashmir stands today, stretching from the Hari Parbat to the Shankaracharya Hill. The city was known as Pravarapura, and it is mentioned by Hiuen Tsang that he visited the new capital in 631 A.D. King Pravarsena II also built the first boat-bridge in Kashmir.

Another Hindu ruler, and perhaps the most celebrated amongst the ancient kings of Kashmir, was Lalitaditya, also known as Muktapida (699-736 A.D.). Lalitaditya was an ambitious ruler and having established peace and prosperity within the land, he launched on his ambitious schemes of conquest of the whole of India. Lalitaditya is said to have subdued the Kings of India upto Ḳanauj and brought almost the whole of Northern India under his subjugation. He even went across the frontiers of India through Afghanistan and invaded Central Asia. After twelve years of continuous campaigning, he returned to Kashmir by way of Tibet, laden with booty and spoils of war. He even received an investiture from the Emperor of China. To commemorate his victory, he laid the foundation of a magnificent city called "Parihaspura" or Paraspur (the modern Shadipur), and destroyed the former capital built by Pravarsena. He built temples and monasteries of which the famous temple of Martand, dedicated to the Sun-god, stands triumphant to this day in its stately grandeur, even though in ruins. Al-Beruni, the Muslim historian, mentions that Kashmiris of that time celebrated an annual festival on a certain day in commemoration of Lalitaditya's victories. Prior to proceeding on his distant campaign of conquests in Central Asia, from which he could never return, Lalitaditya left for his subjects some Machiavellian instructions and advice which formed the basis of his state-craft and polity.

For instance the King recommended :

" Those who in this country desire to have the mastery must at all times guard against dissensions amongst themselves; for, in their case, no peril arises from alien enemies as there is none for the *Charvakas* from the world beyond...."

" Even for no offence in this country, the dwellers in the depths of the mountains should be fined, for if they should accumulate wealth, they might become impregnable in the shelter of the forts....."

"Action should be taken repeatedly so that the people in the villages should not possess grain for consumption and bullocks for the area of the fields in excess of their annual requirements for; if they were to have excessive wealth, they might become very terrible Damaras in a single year, so as to be able to violate the authority of the king."

Such advice given some twelve hundred years back, gives a glimpse of Lalitaditya's art and method of governance and also shows the conditions of the common people in Kashmir under him.

During 759-763 A.D., Oun-Kong, another Chinese traveller, visited Kashmir and found monarchy well rooted in the land. Buddhism was prevalent at the time.

Avanti Varman, who then came into power (855-883 A.D.) was another celebrated ruler of Kashmir. He was an orthodox Hindu, a devotee of Vishnu and, as would become such an individual, he built a number of stone temples at Avantipur dedicated to the worship of Lord Vishnu. It was during his rule that the ablest and the most famous engineer of Kashmir, Suyya, flourished. He was responsible for draining the waters of the Jhelum, in the neighbourhood of Sopore, originally called "Suyyapur" after his name.

Shankar Varman (883-902 A. D.), like some of his predecessors, destroyed and plundered the old capital of Paraspur. This he did so to enhance the fame and prestige of his new town, near Pattan.

The last of the illustrious names in the long line of Hindu rulers of Kashmir, was Queen Didda (950-1003 A. D.) who successfully repulsed the invasions of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni.

Then followed the Lohara Dynasty. Distant territories had now begun to assert their independence and what had by then become a semblance of monarchy was reduced to a mere shadow. Dynasty after dynasty succeeded, but without achieving the long-cherished fruit of consolidated organisation. Might was the order of the day and the sword the sole arbiter of power. In the midst of these chaotic conditions came the Damaras; "well skilled only in burning, plundering and fighting." For over a century, Kashmir continued to be the victim of anarchy and chaos. Then during the reign of Raja Simha Deo (1295-1325 A.D.) there came to the court of the Raja three notable personalities; the Tibetan Prince Ranchen, who having been driven off by his uncle, took shelter at Raja Simha Deo's court; Lankar Chak, the ruler of Dardistan; and Shah Mir, the grandson of Fur Shah, a saint from Swat. The Raja gave them shelter and took them into his service. But these three guests proved traitors to their host and usurped his throne.

Progress of Islam

In 1322 A.D., the Turks invaded Kashmir. Raja Simha Deo and his Minister, Ram Chand, fled. Ram Chand returned after the enemy had left the country. But he was treacherously murdered while sleeping in a room. Ranchen Shah, the Prince of Tibet, who had quarrelled with Ram Chand, cleverly attacked and butchered him in cold blood with the help of Shah Mir and some Ladakhis. He then proclaimed himself as the King of Kashmir. He also married Kuta Rani, the daughter of Ram Chand, and later embraced Islam, taking the new name Sadr-ud-Din. His reign was, however, short-lived and he died after about two and a half years in 1327 A.D.

Ranchen Shah, alias Sadr-ud-din, tried to persecute the Hindus. After his death, Udyanadeo, the brother of the late Raja Simha Deo, who too had fled to Kishtwar, staged a come-back to Kashmir. He married the widowed Queen, Kuta Rani, and reigned for fifteen years. On his death, Kuta Rani assumed the reigns of administration in her own hands, but she was soon over-powered by Shah Mir, who now declared himself King. Shah Mir asked the Queen to marry him but she refused and preferred suicide. Kashmir thereafter came under the rule of a long line of Muslim Sultans and Shah Mir or Shah Mirza became the first of these Muslim rulers, known as *Salatin-Kashmir*. He assumed the title of Shams-ud-Din.

In this new chain of Muslim rulers of Kashmir, the name of Sultan Sikandar (1394-1417 A.D.) stands out prominently even to this day for his fanatic zeal. He is known as *But Shikan* or the iconoclast. He demolished many temples of the Hindus in Kashmir, and offered them a choice between conversion or exile.

Zain-ul-Abdin

Happily was Sikandar followed by a pious and benevolent monarch, Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin (1420-1470 A.D.) whose pious deeds have gone to enrich the romantic legends and folk songs of Kashmir. The Sultan was a wise and virtuous ruler, loved both by his Hindu and Muslim subjects. He remitted the *Jeziya* or the poll-tax on the Hindus, encouraged them to learn Persian, recruited many Hindus into the services and encouraged them to settle down permanently by granting land and by helping them in other ways too. The Sultan also had some of the old shrines of the Hindus repaired, including the temple of Shankaracharya.

Again, he extended royal patronage to Sanskrit learning which resulted in the return of a number of Kashmiri Pandits previously exiled, as well as in the fresh influx of other Brahmins from the South. The gratitude of the Hindus found expression in the writings of the chronicler Srivara, who wrote the third volume of the *Raj Tarangini*. Srivara says: "How shall I describe all his innumerable virtues in this condensed narrative? I therefore paint his virtues in this book as the Himalaya or the three worlds are painted in a picture, or as the sun is reflected in a mirror....As the traders do not allow inequality in their scales, so the King did not brook inequality in his administration. As the lion does not attack other animals in the peaceful hermitage of saints, so the *Turaskas*, who were much alarmed, did not now oppress the Brahmins as they have done before." Srivara further exclaims: "The King's virtuous mode of government in the *Kali Yuga* became glorious like the very middle of the *Satya Yuga*."

Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin was a great builder and laid the foundations of a number of important buildings and townships. He built resting places and caravan serais by the road-side for the convenience of traders and travellers. He also constructed many canals and built many bridges, thus giving to the land he loved monuments of perrenial pride. Before he came to power, the waters of the Dal Lake flowed into the Jhelum and passed the Haba Kadi, but the Sultan closed this channel and forced the waters into the Mar Canal—then known as the Lachma Kul or the Zaina Ganga—which he spanned with seven bridges of masonry work.

The execution of plans like control and diversion of streams and rivers as a preventive measure against heavy floods protected the interests of the agriculturists.

A Lover of Arts

Zain-ul-Abdin introduced many new arts and crafts into the Valley. In his zeal for new arts and industries he invited artisans and craftsmen from far-off countries—from Iran and Turkestan—as well as from India, and offered them special privileges for settling down. It was in his reign that the arts of paper-making, papier-mache, cocoon-rearing, shawl-weaving and planting of fruit trees were introduced and patronized in Kashmir. In 1466 A.D., for the first time, fire arms were introduced in Kashmir.

The Sultan was simple and pious in his habits. For his personal use, he drew upon the proceeds of the royal copper mines discovered by him.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the history of Kashmir were a period of revival and renaissance in classic literature, no less than in the religious and spiritual sphere. The impact of Islamic thought and Sufi ideas on Hindu thought and philosophy led to a devotional religious movement of *Bhakti* or "love" which found expression in the lives of many of the Muslim saints and Hindu recluses. In the fourteenth century there came to Kashmir Sayyid Ali Hamdani, the Central Asian saint persecuted by Timur. He was soon followed by a host of indigenous saints and prophets like Sidh Bey, the Shaiva Yogi, Lal Ded and "Nund Rishi." The mystic songs and sayings of these prophets have enriched the life of Kashmir. And if one were to seek the best exposition of this spiritual revival on the social and political plane in Kashmir, the name of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin stands out most prominently.

The Chaks

Towards the close of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin's reign, the Chaks tried to enter the country several times but they were driven off. Earlier the Sultan had to fight against the Tibetans in Central Asia, and it is said that he conquered Tibet as well. He also exchanged diplomatic missions with the rulers of Khorasan, Turkestan, Seistan, Egypt, Turkey and India.

But the power of the Chaks increased and during the reign of the Sultan's weak successors, they attacked Kashmir once again and seized the reins of power. Later, the last of these Chak rulers, Yaqub Khan, offered stubborn resistance to Akbar, but was finally subjugated by him in 1586 A.D.

The Mughals

During the time of Akbar and his successors, the Valley was ruled by governors appointed from over a long distance by the central Mughal authority in Delhi. Prior to Akbar's conquest of Kashmir, the land had been attacked in 1532 A.D. from the side of Ladakh by Mirza Mohammad Haider Dughlat—author of the famous *Tarikh-Rashidi* and a relation of Babar from his mother's side. The invasion was repeated by him from the south in 1540 A.D. and Kashmir was occupied and ruled by Mirza on behalf of Humayun till the former's death in 1551 A.D. Akbar revived the claims of his ancestors and amalgamated the country with the rest of his Indian Empire. But he did not visit the Valley more than three times. Akbar left a permanent monument of his visit to the country in the form of a strong fortress on the slopes of the Hari Parbat. His Revenue Minister, Todar Mall, made an extensive survey of the revenue administration in the Valley and laid the foundations of a sound revenue system there.

Jehangir

Akbar's son, Jehangir, was a great lover of the natural beauties of Kashmir. It is particularly to him that Kashmir owes the cherished memories of the Mughal rule. Jehangir laid out innumerable pleasure gardens and constructed many a summer house there. The fondness which the Emperor lavished on this fair vale of the East caused legends to grow around his name. The innumerable gardens around the Dal Lake (777 in number, yielding a revenue of one lakh roses and bed-musks), some of them still resplendent in their glory and freshness, revive the memory of the Emperor's good and pious deeds. His wife, Nurjehan, built the famous Pathar Masjid in Srinagar. The Emperor repeated his visits to the Valley during the summer months till his death on the borders of Kashmir, while returning to Lahore, in October 1627 A.D., which was the 59th year of his reign.

Jehangir was succeeded by his son, Shah Jehan, who too enriched the Valley with beautiful buildings and lovely gardens. Yet much depended on the taste and character of the governors, who ruled this distant province in the name of the Grand Mughal. Ali Mardan, one of the Emperor's Viceroys, built a splendid series of *Sarais* or inns on the Pir Panjal route to India. Emperor Aurangzeb visited Kashmir only once. It was during his reign that Francis Bernier visited the Valley and left a record of shawl-making and other industries then flourishing in the land. The Mughal connection with Kashmir lasted till the middle of the 18th century, when as a result of the decline and decay of the Mughal Imperial power itself, the *Subah* or the province of Kashmir became practically independent. The last of the Mughal governors deputed by Emperor Mohammad Shah (1719-1748 A.D.) was Abdul Mansoor Khan.

The Afghans

Kashmir had to experience another spell of terror and oppression at the hands of the Afghan governors who in 1753 A.D. occupied the land under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Durrani. Most of these Afghan governors were deputed from Kabul, and, as foreigners, cared little for the welfare and interests of the people of Kashmir. Their sole interest was to plunder and loot the people. For a period of nearly three quarters of a century, the Kashmiris had to undergo terrible sufferings at the hands of most of these Afghan rulers.

Many of the Kashmiri Pandits, preferred emigration to the tyranny of the Afghan masters. Even the Muslims of Kashmir were not exempt from the harsh rule of their cruel masters. Yet some Hindus, like Pandit Zairam Bhan and Pandit Nath Ram Tikoo, were favoured at the Afghan court for their literary and intellectual merits. The last of the Afghan governors was Jabbar Khan (1819 A.D.).

Sikh Rule

The people of Kashmir, in utter despair looked to the rising power of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore, who was then at the pinnacle of his fame. Some of the persecuted Hindus of Kashmir, under the leadership of Pandit Birbal Dhar, a diplomatic courtier, sent an appeal to Maharaja Ranjit Singh for assistance. The Maharaja agreed to help them, and in 1814 A.D. despatched a Sikh army to Kashmir via the Pir Panjal route, himself remaining in the background to direct the operations from Poonch. The expedition proved a failure. However, when in 1819 A.D. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's best general, Misri Dewan Chand, accompanied by the Dogra chief, Gulab Singh of Jammu, once again invaded Kashmir, they overpowered Muhammad Azim Khan, and entered Shupiyan. The Sikhs established their authority over the Valley. From 1819 to 1846 A.D., Kashmir remained subject to Sikh rule. The Sikh rulers deputed their governors from Lahore to rule over the land in their name. Sher Singh, the son of Ranjit Singh, was a weak governor and his reign was marked by famine and starvation. The best amongst these Sikh governors was Col. Mian Singh (1833 A.D.), whose name is still remembered by the Kashmiris with love and affection. The last of these governors appointed by the Sikh State at Lahore was Sheikh Imam-ud-Din (1846 A.D.)

AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE HIMALAYAS
Leh Vicinity

The Dogras

While Kashmir was passing through these political upheavals, a new power had arisen in the hilly regions of the State, away from the plains of the Punjab. By the end of the 18th century, the local kingdom of Jammu had extended east as far as the Ravi, and west as far as the Chenab. Raja Ranjit Deo was one of the most notable Dogra Chiefs of this hilly region. But after his death (1718 A.D.) the Dogra territory of Jammu became a tributary to the Sikh power. In 1812 A.D., Gulab Singh, a descendent of Raja Ranjit Deo, entered the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was one of his ablest lieutenants. A soldier of fortune as he was, Gulab Singh rapidly distinguished himself in the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore. He was created Raja of Jammu in 1820 A.D. by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in return for his services in capturing the Raja of Rajauri, who had been fighting against the Sikhs. Gulab Singh thus rose to a position of great eminence and after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 A.D. he was the most influential man left in the Sikh army.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had thought it wise to leave the control and administration of the Dogra country to its own ruler. On his part, Gulab Singh preferred to retire into the interior and organize the Dogra territory on a sound basis. His methods were severe. He kept a vigilant eye on his chieftains and a tight grip on the revenues of his State. Soon, within a period of only ten years, Gulab Singh and his two brothers succeeded in establishing their domination over nearly all the country lying between Kashmir and the Punjab, except Rajauri. One after the other, all the petty principalities lying between the Kashmir Valley and Jammu were annexed by him. Bhadarwah fell into his hands after a short resistance. Kishtwar also—where the Minister Wazir Lakhpat had quarrelled with the Maharaja and had sought

Gulab Singh's help—came under his influence without any fighting. From 1835 to 1842 A.D., Gulab Singh busied himself with conquering Baltistan and Western Tibet. His famous General, Zorawar Singh, conquered the whole of Ladakh and annexed it to the Jammu State. A few years later, in 1840 A.D., Zorawar Singh invaded Baltistan too, captured the Raja of Skardu who had previously aided the Ladakhis, and annexed the whole of his territory to Gulab Singh's domains. In 1841 A.D., Zorawar Singh invaded Tibet, but, unable to stand the severe winter, he perished during the campaign together with nearly all his infantry. By the end of 1842 A.D., Gulab Singh had, by strategy or by accident, encircled the whole of Kashmir.

The Anglo-Sikh War

In the wintry month of November 1845 A.D., war broke out between the British and the Sikhs. Gulab Singh, who had entertained an ambition to carve out a kingdom for himself, was wise enough to size this political situation and turn it to his own advantage. It was now obvious that the Britishers would be the future rulers in India. The weak successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were apparently bewildered. The Sikh Durbar at Lahore asked Gulab Singh to take over the charge of the Empire and installed him as Prime Minister in 1846 A.D., but Gulab Singh cunningly intrigued with the British and contrived to hold himself aloof. On some pretext or other, Gulab Singh and other Sikh leaders managed not to lead the Sikh armies against the British. Gulab Singh thus proved himself a useful ally to Sir Henry Lawrence. The Battle of Sobraon in 1846 A.D. sealed the fate of Sikh power in India. Gulab Singh paved the way for the British victory. After the battle of Sobraon, the British marched to Lahore and captured it. Two treaties were then con-

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cluded: by the first, called the "Treaty of Lahore" signed on March 9, 1846 A.D., the Sikh power at Lahore agreed to give to the British, as equivalent for the indemnity of one crore of rupees, the hilly countries lying between the rivers Bias and Indus. Amongst other clauses provided in the Treaty, it was stipulated that Raja Gulab Singh would be recognised as an independent sovereign in such territories in the hills as may be made over to him by a separate agreement between the British and the said Raja. This separate agreement which came to be known as the "Treaty of Amritsar," was signed on March 16, 1846 A.D. By this Treaty the province of Kashmir, including Gilgit (which had been conquered by the Sikhs in 1842), was transferred to Gulab Singh.

Gulab Singh

Gulab Singh, who was now complete master of the internal administration of the State, proved himself a wise and strong ruler. During his short rule of eleven years, he tried to consolidate peace and establish order in the country. Yet he had to waste much of his energy in suppressing anarchy and disturbances on the frontiers. Soon, trouble broke out in Gilgit also. The Hunza Raja attacked the Gilgit territory. Nathu Shah, the Sikh Commander in the service of Gulab Singh, fought it back by leading an army to attack the Hunza Valley. He and his army were, however, routed and Gilgit fort fell into the hands of the Hunza Raja along with Punial, Yasin and Darel. The Maharaja then sent two forces, one from Astor and the other from Baltistan. The fort of Gilgit was recovered. But in 1852 A.D. again the Dogras were defeated and expelled by the blood-thirsty Gauhar Rahman of Yasin from that part of Dardistan which is on the right bank of the Indus. Gilgit also was lost to the Dogras and Gulab Singh

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी

decided to advance no further. For eight years, Indus thus formed the boundary of the Maharaja's territory.

Gulab Singh, according to the testimony of British historians, was "a just and reasonable" man and was "affable in manner." He tried to carry out the administration in a just and able manner according to his own convictions and lights.

Ranbir Singh

Gulab Singh died in 1857 A.D. and his only surviving son, Ranbir Singh, came to the throne. He was a great administrator, and gave Kashmir a stabilized system of government. His first object was to recover Gilgit which had been lost, and to re-establish the reputation of his father on the frontier. Mutual jealousies and internal dissensions between the Raja of Hunza and those of other parts of the frontier, paved the way for Raja Ranbir Singh's success. The Rajas of Hunza and Nagar hated each other and those of Punial and Yasin were far from favourably disposed to one another. Gauhar Rahman, who had held Gilgit from 1852 A.D. onwards, was now dead. In 1860 A.D., a force despatched by Maharaja Ranbir Singh under Dev Singh crossed the Indus, and advanced towards Gauhar Rahman's fortress at Gilgit. Maharaja Ranbir Singh not only regained Gilgit, but also subdued Yasin in 1863 A.D. When, at the incitement of the Mehtar of Chitral, disturbances broke out in the frontier during 1865 A.D., Maharaja Ranbir Singh despatched his forces and succeeded in occupying even the Darel Valley. Since then the strategic frontier-post of Gilgit has been in the possession of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir State with all the international advantages and complexities attached to it.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh was essentially a man of peace. He was devotedly attached to his religion and to the cause of revival of Sanskrit learning. He extended his patronage to deserving individuals of all castes and creeds. He encouraged learning and research work and established a good library of old Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts. The Jhelum Road was constructed by him to meet the growing needs of traffic and trade between India and Kashmir.

Though enlightened in many ways, Maharaja Ranbir Singh lacked the political foresight and stern determination of his father. The latter part of his reign was marred by an open clash in 1872 A.D. between the two Muslim sects, the Shias and the Sunnis, in which many precious lives were lost. The Maharaja gave three hundred thousand rupees as relief to the Shias. Soon after another tragedy overtook the state, when thousands perished in a devastating famine.

In 1878 A.D., the Afghan war broke out, and the Maharaja sent a contingent of troops and artillery to help the British Government. The British were not slow to realise the strategic importance of Gilgit. The British emphasised on the Kashmir Maharaja the necessity of appointing a British Resident or Political Agent in the State. But the demand was not conceded by Maharaja Ranbir Singh.

Pratap Singh

Maharaja Ranbir Singh died on September 12, 1885, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Pratap Singh. Maharaja Pratap Singh was a man of peace, but lacked the strong will of his father. The British had made up their minds, knew what they wanted and finally succeeded in getting it. They thrust on the Maharaja a Resident to be present at his court. The first to be selected for this post was Sir Oliver St. John. Soon he was succeeded in 1886 A.D. by Mr. Plowden. The relations between the Maharaja and Mr. Plowden were not cordial, and the latter kept himself busy with intrigues and designs against the former. He constantly manoeuvred against the Maharaja and was cunning enough to pave the way for a proposal to place his younger brother Amar Singh on the throne. The Maharaja, who was accused of mal-administration and indulgence in corrupt practices, was threatened and coerced into signing a deed of voluntary abdication. According to Mr. Plowden's plan a new Council was appointed to over-ride the individual powers of the Maharaja. Thereby it was intended to make the Residency the supreme authority in the Sate. The whole conspiracy was, however, exposed by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta, which published an autographed letter of Maharaja Pratap Singh to the then Viceroy, with the result that the Political Resident could not obtain the abdication of the Maharaja and, under the pressure of agitation in other parts of India, the plan had to be abandoned for good. The British, nevertheless, ultimately gained their cherished designs and obtained their right of intervention in the State. They also fortified Gilgit and garrisoned British troops there. A British military post was thus set up on this strategic frontier of India.

In 1885 A.D. a terrible earthquake caused havoc in Kashmir, destroying the lives of many people and ruining a large number of houses. The closing years of Maharaja Pratap Singh's reign were far from happy. The administration was corrupt and the revenues were depleted. A few favourites of the Resident monopolised the high offices and the Maharaja became a mere figurehead. Yet Kashmir was modernized under Maharaja Pratap Singh. Educational institutions and means of communication were extended and improved, electricity was introduced and the foundations were laid for popular institutions. Sir Walter Lawrence completed the Land Settlement, thus reinstating the evicted cultivators in their holdings which had been illegally confiscated. *Begar*—forced free labour from people—was abolished in Gilgit and Kashmir.

Hari Singh

Maharaja Pratap Singh left no male heir to the throne and was, therefore, succeeded by his nephew, Raja Hari Singh, son of the late Maharaja's younger brother Raja Amar Singh. As the Senior Member of the State Council, during his uncle's reign, Raja Hari Singh had shown considerable aptitude and capacity for administration. From the very commencement of his reign he showed a keen interest in the welfare of his subjects. He got the definition of the "Hereditary State Subject" legally elucidated and enforced as an important measure of reform in favour of permanent state subjects.

Brought up as he was in western ways, Maharaja Hari Singh took steps to modernize Kashmir. Under him, the State made considerable progress; education was slowly expanded under a planned scheme, hospitals and dispensaries were established, agriculturists' rights were protected and rural uplift was given an impetus through proper legislation. In 1934 A.D., a *Praja Sabha*, or Legislative Assembly, was established in the State. In 1939 A.D., the majority of its members were elected representatives.

Political Agitation

The formation and functioning of the *Praja Sabha* was a step towards democratization of Government and proved a success. In 1944 A.D. two elected representatives from the *Praja Sabha* were chosen as Ministers in a Cabinet of five. These reforms, however, were the result of continuous agitation all over the

State since 1931.

For, during the thirties Kashmir witnessed a new political consciousness and a mass awakening. The fountainhead of this political agitation for responsible democratic government was Sheikh Mohammed Abdulla, who holds a post-graduate degree in Science from Aligarh Muslim University. In October 1932 A.D., he formed the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference of which he became the acknowledged leader. From the beginning of 1935 A.D., Sheikh Abdulla attempted to unite all communities on one platform. It was in May 1936 A.D. that the Muslim Conference for the first time defined its goal as "Full Responsible Government." Three years later, on June 11, 1939 A.D., at a Special Session, the Muslim Conference was re-christened as the "All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference."

The National Conference

Ever since, the people of Kashmir—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—have all been fighting as one man under the flag of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. In the year 1944 A.D., the National Conference came out with its full-fledged Socialist programme, in the pamphlet "New Kashmir." The programme represents the concept of a model state and full responsible government according to the National Conference policy. This new scheme was based "on the democratic principle of responsible government with the elective principle, applied from the Local Panchayat right up to the National Assembly." In May 1946 A.D., the National Conference presented the British Cabinet Mission the "Quit Kashmir" resolution. This Memorandum questioned the validity of the Treaty of Amritsar of 1846 A.D., which was termed by Sheikh Abdulla as a "Sale Deed," transferring the rights of the Kashmir people for a sum of seven and a half million rupees. A "Quit Kashmir" movement followed the memorandum, leading to mass arrests of the National Conference workers.

Partition and After

The partition of India on August 15, 1947 A.D. had its repercussions on Kashmir. Sheikh Abdulla was released from prison on September 29, 1947. On October 22, 1947 tribal raiders from Pakistan invaded Kashmir. On October 26, 1947, the Maharaja of Kashmir sought accession of his State to the Indian Union, and was accepted by the Government of India. On the next day, October 27, Indian troops and forces landed in Srinagar following a request of immediate help by the Maharaja. On October 30th, 1947, Sheikh Abdullah was appointed Head of the Emergency Administration. On March 5, 1948, by a Proclamation the Maharaja conferred on Sheikh Abdulla the Prime Ministership of the State, and he was authorised to get the constitution of the State framed by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

By another Proclamation issued on June 20, 1949 A.D., Maharaja Hari Singh authorised his son, Yuvraj Karan Singh, to carry on all functions of the State, legislative, executive and judicial, as the Regent during the period of his temporary absence from the State.

3

A GREAT PAST

KASHMIR has all through its history been a great seat of arts and learning. Here flourished from days of yore various schools of thought and culture. Art and literature blossomed forth, bringing in their train influences and inspirations from different parts of the world.

The ancient Aryans, when they set their foot on Indian soil, made Kashmir, with the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas, one of their earliest homes. Seekers of truth and knowledge came here from different nooks and corners of the then known world to seek solace and inspiration from the eternal mountains. Religions and creeds grew and throve there, and then spread enlightenment to other regions of Asia. Thus a distinctive cultural and spiritual tradition was founded and many a great shrine and monument, reminding the people of this tradition, was raised in different parts of the great Valley. These architectural ruins and remnants are today the embodiment of those great spiritual achievements. Truly has it been remarked by Arthur Neve that "Ancient India has nothing more worthy of its early civilization than the grand remains of Kashmir."

How vividly do these scattered ruins, though half-crumbled and faded, confirm the praise bestowed upon the Kashmiris in the *Raj Tarangini*! Writes Kalhana: "Kashmiris were called *Shastra-Shilpina*, *i.e.*, architects." What greater praise could these monuments elicit for a people who have still preserved their ancient traditions of refinement and grace?

Foreign Influences

Grecian influences from the Buddhist-Gandhara art, penetrated Kashmir from very early days. Similarly, Buddhist elements from Indian art and later on Hindu art traditions and Islamic architecture influenced the mode and method of Kashmiri architects. All these varied ideas and symbols, in the form of Buddhist *Stupas* and *Viharas*, Hindu architectural decoration and relief-sculptures, Islamic simplicity and massiveness, and the slender and elegant Grecian pillars and columns, have survived to this day in spite of centuries of political upheaval and devastation.

Cultural harmony and spiritual unity *has been* thus the proud background of ancient Kashmir against which many of its historic ruins and symbolic antiquities have come to be associated. It is against this background that one might study the grand proportions and noble symmetries of Kashmir's ancient ruins and remnants, at once ponderous and graceful to the spectator.

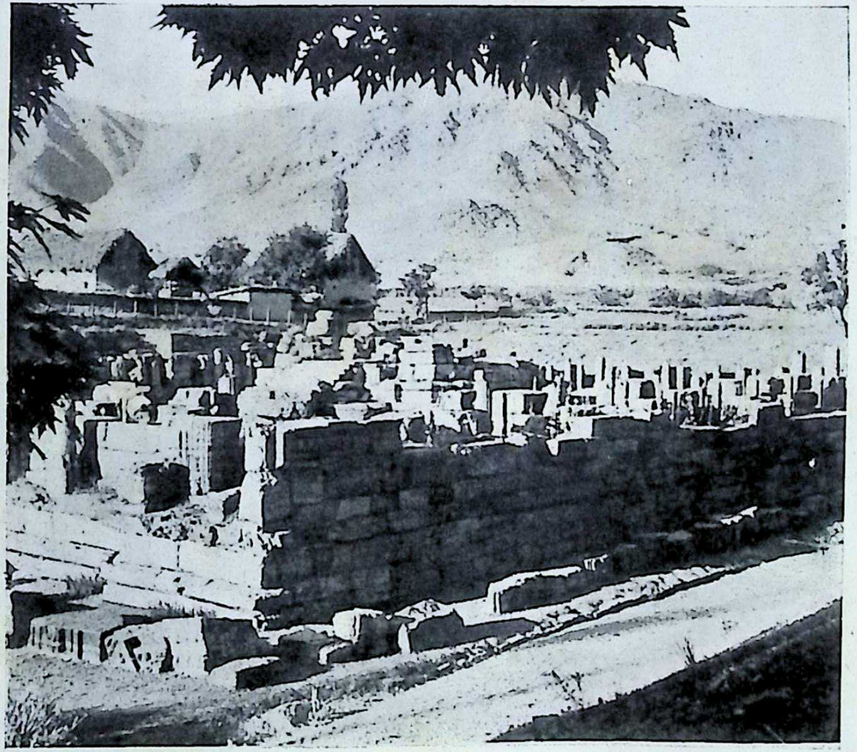
These monuments can be classed period-wise, according to the particular period of history to which they belong. The most prominent amongst them are those that belong to the ancient period. These are at once grand and majestic, and yet so elegant and delicate that they elicit the admiration of all visitors to Kashmir to this day. These ruins are not only models of classic art and technique, but standing in their huge and towering proportions, symmetrically poised on slender pillars and graceful columns, they are unique in their own way. In their physical expression, in the method of their lines and curves, they represent to us the mind and soul of the artists of those days, as also the social spirit of that era.

Temples of Avantipura

Of the many architectural ruins of Kashmir that have survived to this day, those of the temples lying at Avantipura, at a distance of nineteen miles from Srinagar, on the right bank of the Jhelum, are worthy of great admiration. The town which was originally known as *Vishvaika-sara*, was founded by King Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.). He also constructed at this site two great temples, one before his accession to the throne and the other after he ascended it. The temples known as "Avantiswamin" and "Avantishvara" were dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva respectively. These temples, one situated at Avantipura and the other at Jaubar, still impress the visitor with their sumptuousness, grandeur and magnificence. They are built, as all Kashmir monuments are, of huge blocks of lime-stone—massive and durable. But the visitor can find nothing except jumbled masses of ruins scattered here and there. Their imposing gateways can still be seen from afar raising their heads above the half-buried walls. The smaller temple, which has lately been excavated, shows rich and elaborate carving of a varied character on its still-standing pillars and arched recesses, while the large detached columns are less elegantly proportioned. The two temples, though now only in ruins, are a testimony of the great works undertaken by King Avantivarman. It was in the reign of this King that the first and foremost engineer of Kashmir—Suyya—dredged the waters of the Jhelum below Baramulla and saved the people of the Valley from periodical floods.

Martand Temple

Similar in style are the ruins of the temple of Martand, situated four miles from Anantnag on the Srinagar-Pahalgam road. The Martand temple, dedicated to the Sun-god, occupies a unique site in Kashmir. Its huge dimensions and bold contours lend it an appearance, at once imposing and massive. No wonder



RUINS OF AVANTIPURA TEMPLE

"Martand" came to be known as "The Architectural Lion of Kashmir."

The temple, measuring 63 feet in width, with the dimensions of the flute-pillared quadrangle 220 by 142 feet, consists of one lofty central edifice, around which there is a small wing on each side of the entrance. The whole building stands surrounded by a colonnade of fluted pillars with intervening trefoil-headed recesses. The exact date of the construction of the temple is a matter of dispute. Probably, it was built between 370 and 500 A.D. Notwithstanding the general belief that the temple was dedicated to the Sun-god, an impression prevails that the Martand contained an image of Vishnu, thereby suggesting its dedication to a different deity. Established in the temple, according to Cunningham, was an observatory equipped with astronomical instruments and literature.

Temples at Pandrethan

But one need not confine oneself to Martand alone to have a picture of all that was grand and splendid in ancient Kashmir. The ruins of the temple at Pandrethan, a place about four miles from Srinagar, are equally remarkable. An ancient temple—18 feet square—of sculptured stone, rising in the centre of a tank and surrounded by willows and *chenars*, still stands, a grim reminder of the splendour that is now fading. The ceiling of the dome deserves particular attention, showing the classic sculptured embellishments of the tenth century.

The temple, dedicated to Vishnu, was built during the reign of King Partha (906-921 A.D.) by his Prime Minister, Mervahana. Hence its name Meruvardhana-swamin. One might also recall that it was here that the original city of Srinagari, built by Asoka, once stood.

Ruins at Paraspur

The site of the ancient Parihaspura or Paraspur, founded by King Lalitaditya Muktapida (701-734 A.D.) contains monuments of considerable interest. To-day one finds rising from the ruined mounds buildings of varied character—temple-ruins at Paraspur, temple foundations of *Vainya-Swamin* on the Paraspur-Udar near Ekmanpur and the dilapidated constructions at Malikpur. Of the temples to the west of Divar village, only a jumbled mass of huge blocks survives. The visitor while making his way through these ruins, can still distinguish from amongst them the demarcations of old palace-residences, Buddhist *stupas* and a monastery, as well as Hindu shrines and temples. They hearken us back to the days of classic culture and civilization, when Kashmir's influences travelled far beyond its frontiers.

Other Ruins

Kashmir thus abounds in ruins and remnants which are a source of inspiration for its songs and legends. The temples at Pattan, seventeen miles from Srinagar, built by Shanker Varman (883-901 A.D.), and those at Bandi and Buniar, apart from their cultural and artistic importance, are great archaeological treasures. Harwan, about eleven miles from Srinagar, has the oldest monuments in Kashmir, containing perhaps the only remains of its oldest kind in India. Similarly, there are cave-temples of the fifth or sixth century at Bhaumjo near Anantnag and a small ancient shrine at Payech. Higher up in the Sind Valley are the ruined temples near Thyun and Vangat on the spur of the Harmukh peak.

In Srinagar itself, almost rising from its outskirts, is the temple of Shankaracharya, mounting like a sentinel on the crest of the Shankaracharya hill. The temple is almost the first thing that holds the attention of the visitor from afar, as he approaches the Valley. The ruins of *Pari Mahal* or the Abode of Fairies, rising from the waters of the Dal Lake, are like a call from a legendary world. They are reminiscent of the days when the Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh built these edifices for housing an astronomical observatory as well as a library.

Today these ruins, though perishable in material, are still alive and vibrating. The sight of their half-broken columns and crumbling pillars, dilapidated arches and propped-up roofs, inspire awe and reverence. In them, one can glimpse the whole evolution of Kashmir's cultural past—wars and battles, death and destruction—at the hands of a vandal or time's unconquerable agencies. But what a striking spirit of homogeneity and cultural unity they symbolize! From them one can derive the inspiration of that eternal message of peace and harmony, which has been bestowed on Kashmir and its people partly by nature and partly by the traditions of friendliness and unity imbibed through centuries of cultural exchange.

4

NATURE'S GIFTS

SHELTERED by narrow mountain-passes and towering ranges of the Karakoram and the Himalayas, Kashmir is a great attraction to people all the world over. The Valley, which forms one of the finest countries upon which the sun has ever shone, has been described by different writers in glorious terms like "A dream of loveliness," "The Jewel of Asia," "The Eden of the East" or "The Terrestrial Paradise of the Indies."

And, indeed, the attractions of Kashmir are many and its delights unending. The land offers a paradise of immense pleasures. "Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring, or an iron-fort to a palace of Kings—a delightful flower-bed, and a heart-expanding heritage of Dervishes." Never has the spring been more glorious, the roses and daisies more fragrant, the sunshine more radiant and joyful than in this garden-land of the East ; its bounty and smile perennial. Like a ravishing queen of the eastern spring, Kashmir lures the Himalayas; nay, it lures the East.

Attracted by its charms, poets and singers have flocked to Kashmir to find in its bosom the creative joy of life and beauty. And the land with its variegated beauties, its perennial snows and picturesque vistas, the emerald meadows and luxuriant orchards, its verdant vales and majestic hills, the shady *chenars* and the silent pines, has so often inspired the imagination and set the chords of the heart attuning.

A Perennial Garden

The Valley is a perennial garden, whether in summer or by wintry months. In spring, when the hills and dales are lighted up by a banquet of sweet-scented blossoms, the Valley is a mass of colours running riot. In the rains, the meadows are filled with emerald carpets and glistening dew-drops. In autumn, it is a flame of pale-ochre colour bedimmed with weather's weary chase. And in winter, when the peaks are covered with snow, the Valley puts on a thick mantle of pearly white snow covering the dead and the dying leaves. From spring to winter, it is a vale of ever-lasting allurements, enchanting those who seek in its bosom a solace born of beauty, always longed for, always craved.

Biggest Indian State

In area, the State of Jammu and Kashmir has been the biggest State in India, being slightly smaller than Great Britain, a bit larger than Hyderabad, and co-extensive in area with the four big Indian States of Mysore, Bikaner, Gwalior and Baroda taken together. It is equal to two-thirds of the total size of the Bombay Presidency. Until recently there were only two important roads connecting the State with British India, namely, the Banihal Cart Road running between Jammu and Srinagar, and the Jhelum-Valley Road. A third road has now been constructed which connects Jammu with the Indian Union, through Pathankot. But for these roads, the seclusion of the State of Jammu and Kashmir would have greatly increased.

The area of the State which covers nearly 87,471 square miles, extends between 32.17° and 36.50° North Latitude and 73.26° and 80.3° East Longitude. The Valley, surrounded by a whole girdle of snowy mountains, is 84 miles long and 24 miles broad.

Geographical Divisions

Geographically, the State is divided into three political divisions for administrative purposes :—

(*i*) The Jammu Province ;
(*ii*) The Kashmir Province ; and
(*iii*) The Frontier *Illaqa*.

(*i*) The Jammu Province, which includes the Southern Plains and the sub-mountainous region, consists of the districts of Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi, Mirpur, and the Jagirs of Poonch and Chenani.

(*ii*) The Kashmir Province, which consists of the actual Jhelum Valley and the Valleys that drain into the Kishenganga and the Liddar, includes the districts of Anantnag, Baramulla and Muzaffarabad.

(*iii*) The Frontier Illaqa, which comprises the frontier districts of Ladakh, Skardu, Kargil, Zanskar and the Gilgit Agency.

Strategic Situation

Kashmir's unique geographic position on the map of Asia makes it one of the most strategic points in world politics.

Lying to the north-west of India, the State of Jammu and Kashmir is the converging point of many big powers. Its boundaries extend from the northern outskirts of the vast alluvial plains of the Punjab to the point where the borders of many an independent country meet the Indian Union. It is bounded on the north by the Karakoram range, including the Chinese Turkestan and Russian Turkestan, on the east by the high tableland of Tibet, on the west by the North-West Frontier Province and the independent kingdom of Afghanistan. On its southern side lies the Punjab, now divided into the East Punjab (India) and West Punjab (Pakistan). The State is thus encircled by Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Tibet and Afghanistan.

Kashmir commands and defends the northern-most frontiers of the Indian Union, and is, therefore, of great importance to India. The land is constantly kept guarded by high Himalayan ranges with only one opening in the north, that through Gilgit.

Cultural Divisions

Culturally, the State of Jammu and Kashmir comprises at least six distinct sets of people, each having a rich language, as also its own culture, customs and manners, and each inhabiting a specific region in the State. They were all conquered and grouped together into one single political unit by Maharaja Gulab Singh about a hundred years back. These distinct regions or zones are as follows :—

(*i*) Dugar or the land of the Dogras : It is directly contiguous to the Indian Union and includes the districts of Kathua, Jammu, Udhampur and the eastern parts of Reasi and Mirpur districts of the Jammu Province. Its total area is about 9,000 square miles, with a population of about 11,00,000, of which about 9,00,000, are Hindus. It is the only connecting link between India and the State and is, therefore, the most important part of the State from the Indian point of view.

(*ii*) Ladakh or the land of the Tibetan Buddhists: It lies to the north of Dugar and is directly contiguous to Dugar and East Punjab. Its total area is about 31,000 square miles, while its total population is about 40,000, of which about 36,000 are Buddhists. The chief town is Leh.

(*iii*) Baltistan or the land of the Balti Muslims : It is situated to the north of Kashmir and west of Ladakh. Its total area is about 15,000 square miles, while its population is about 1,30,000 almost all of which is Muslim. Skardu is the chief town. The main occupation of these Balti Muslims is collecting and refining gold-dust from the Indus.

(*iv*) Gilgit or the land of the Dards : It lies to the west of Baltistan and to the north-west of Kashmir. Its total area is about 17,000 square miles, while its population is about 1,16,000, almost all consisting entirely of Shia Muslims. Gilgit is its chief town and occupies a most strategic geographical position.

(*v*) Mirpur-Poonch-Muzaffarabad: These districts form the Punjabi-speaking region along the western boundary of the State. Their total area is about 5,000 square miles, while the poplation is about 10,00,000, of which about 1,00,000 were Hindus.

(*vi*) The Valley of Kashmir or the land of the Kashmiris: The total area of this part of the State is about 6,000 square miles, while its total population is about 15,00,000, of which about 1,00,000 are Hindus.

Of these six cultural regions, three, namely Baltistan, Gilgit, Mirpur-Poonch-Muzaffarabad, at present lie on the Pakistan side of the Cease-Fire line, while the others are on the Indian side.

Languages and Dialects

As in physical regions, so also in languages and dialects, Kashmir has its variety. The population consists of diverse people, with varying modes of life, and they speak various languages and dialects.

The Kashmiris speak 13 different languages and dialects, the chief amongst these being Dogri, Kashmiri, Pahari, Ladakhi and Dardi.

The people inhabiting the Jammu Province along the left side of the river Chenab, the Dogras, mainly use the Dogri language, though many of them speak Punjabi also.

The inhabitants of Mirpur, Poonch, Rajauri, Muzaffarabad, Ramban, Bhadarwah and Kishtwar are Paharis and belong to the Pahari-speaking groups.

Chabali is as distinct from the Dogri as the latter is from the Punjabi. It is common all along the western mountainous region.

Kashmiri is the chief language of the people inhabiting the Kashmir Province across the Pir Panjal range.

The people inhabiting the Frontier *Illaqa* of Ladakh and Gilgit belong to the Tibetan language group. The languages spoken in this region are Bhotia and Shina. Shina is commoner in Gilgit, Astore, Gurez and Dras. Ladakhi is a spoken language of Ladakh or Western Tibet.

Most of these languages have inherited a rich literature of their own—both written and spoken. Of these, the Dogri, the Kashmiri, the Tibeti and the Punjabi languages have their separate scripts and therefore also possess a rich literary heritage of their own. The ancient script of Dogri was "Takri". Modern literature has inherited a precious legacy in poetry from this script. But there are other languages—like Chabali, Dardi and Pahari—which have not been reduced to a script and are therefore mainly spoken languages only.

Since the beginning of the modern era, Urdu has also gained popularity in Kashmir. Of late most of the Kashmiri poets and prose-writers express their national urges and aspirations in Urdu, thus giving to Urdu—which is already the official language of the State—a semi-national character.

Population

The total population of Kashmir, according to the census figures of 1941, is 40,21,616. As a whole, the State is mountainous and as such it is thinly populated. The Jammu Province is the most thickly populated, while the population of the Frontier *Illaqa* is very sparse. In the 1941 census the princely State stood as the fourth biggest of its kind in India. The distribution of population, according to administrative units, is as under :—

(*i*)	Jammu Province	19,81,433
(*ii*)	Kashmir Province	17,28,705
(*iii*)	Frontier *Illaqa*	3,11,478
	Total Population	40,21,616

The average density of population per square mile is 43. Kashmir has 2 cities, 39 towns and 8,903 villages. The total urban population is 3,62,314, while the total rural population is 35,03,929.

The distribution of population according to communities was in 1941 as below :

1.	Muslims (including Shias)	31,01,247
2.	Hindus	8,09,165
3.	Sikhs	65,903
4.	Buddhists	40,696
5.	Minor communities	4,605

Of these, the Muslims form the majority, being 77.11 per cent. of the total population. The Hindus are in a majority in the Jammu Province. The Buddhists abound in the eastern parts of the Ladakh districts. The Sikhs and other communities are scattered all over the State.

Economic Resources

Kashmir is very rich in mineral wealth and possesses mines of the following descriptions :

(*i*) Coal, Lignite and Petroleum.
(*ii*) Bauxite, Iron, Copper, Lead, Zinc, Nickel ore, Manganese, Gold, Arsenic and Chromite.
(*iii*) Gypsum, Saltpetre, Graphite, Kaoline, Bentonite, Marble and Slate.
(*iv*) Corrundum, Beryl and Aqua-marine.

Occupation of the People

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people, but the holdings of a great majority of the agriculturists are miserably small. Quite a large number of people in the towns and cities, however, live and thrive on their own arts and crafts.

Thus Kashmir, though inhabited by people in different regions and speaking diverse languages and dialects, forms a cultural unity which is unique and far more profound than traceable elsewhere, being strengthened by social and political ties.

5

LITERARY HERITAGE

KASHMIR has inherited a rich cultural and literary legacy which reflects a remarkable union of different cultural and literary movements. For a long time Kashmir, along with Nalanda and Taxila, shared fame as an important seat of learning and culture in the East. Here gathered, in the wake of commercial enterprise, scholars and saints from different parts of Asia, to meet and exchange ideas on the fundamentals of religion. Powerful literary and social movements soon developed, which gradually spread not only to other parts of India, but even beyond India's borders to Tibet, China and other adjacent countries. It was also in Kashmir that the later developments in Buddhist thought and philosophy received an elaborate treatment and influenced its socio-cultural pattern.

However, the cultural and political history of Kashmir entered a new phase, when Islam spread over the land. As was natural, classical Sanskrit tradition suffered a set-back and its place was taken by Persian, which was then made the official language of the court. But this era, curiously enough, did not bring about any sudden or radical changes, much less did it mark the beginning of separatist tendencies. Instead, it brought about a harmonious blending or amalgamation of the new and the old, giving birth to new cultural traditions in Kashmir's Renaissance. It was a new phase in the history of Kashmir, and, coincidental with the growth of Persian literature, it ushered in the development of local Kashmiri literature, which absorbed in its vocabulary both Persian and Sanskrit words. This phase of popular Kashmiri literature, combining in it Persian and Sanskrit traditions and Islamic and Hindu philosophies, showed a wonderful capacity for development in the later period and left a rich legacy of cultural synthesis.

A Common Heritage

But the classical Sanskrit literature, which flourished in Kashmir during the early Buddhist and Hindu periods, is the common heritage of India as a whole. Unfortunately, much of this ancient Sanskrit literature has not been preserved and we may perhaps not be able to compile a connected account of the literary and cultural movements of this period; the fact, nevertheless, remains that Kashmir for long remained within the orbit of ancient Indian cultural thought. We have, however, one great work from Kashmir, which has come down to us as a single great piece by a literary genius. It is Kalhana's *Raj Tarangini*, or "The River of Kings," the most important available historical document of the period.

Kalhana the Historian

Kalhana flourished in the middle of the 12th century A.D. and began compiling the history of Kashmir in 1148 A.D. Born in a Brahmin family—his father, Champaka, was the minister of King Harsha (1089-1101 A.D.)—Kalhana was particularly suited for this task. By birth a worshipper of Shiva, he respected other sects and religions as his own. For his material, Kalhana depended on the chronicles of the past. Among his predecessors, on whom he has drawn heavily for the valuable material used in his *Raj Tarangini*, are Helaraja of the 8th century A.D., Ratnakara, who lived in the reign of King Avantivarman (872-900 A.D.), and Kshemendra (990-1065 A.D.) of the time of King Kalasa

(1063-1089 A.D.).

After Kalhana's death, the work of writing history was continued by other scholars. In the Muslim period, during the time of King Zain-ul-Abdin (1420-1470 A.D.), the narrative was continued by Jona Raja who wrote in Sanskrit and Mulla Ahmad who preferred Persian. Both these writers brought the history of Kashmir from Kalhana's time right up to their own day. Zain-ul-Abdin, it may be pointed out, was one of the most progressive rulers of Kashmir. No account of the literary history of Kashmir during the Muslim period can be complete without a mention of his name, for he not only brought peace and goodwill in the spheres of religion and politics, but also left a lasting impression in the field of letters. This great monarch attracted chroniclers and scholars and poets to his court from far and near. Speaking of his benevolence, Abul Fazl writes in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, "Such was his benevolence and love of his subjects that he abolished the poll-tax, which used to be levied on the Hindoos, forbade oxen from being slain and entirely abolished all taxes............. He translated many books from the Arabic, Persian, Cashmeerian and Sanskrit languages." The Sultan was undoubtedly one of the greatest of medieval patrons of letters. He persuaded Maulana Kabir, the famous theologian, to return to Kashmir from Herat and placed the educational institution *Dar-ul-Ulum* in his charge. Mulla Ahmad Kashmiri, who brought the chronicles of Kalhana upto his own day in Persian, was a leading figure at the Sultan's court. The Mulla had actually come to Kashmir in the reign of Zain-ul-Abdin's predecessor, Sultan Sikandar. He was a profound scholar and a distinguished poet, and left behind many works, besides the famous *Tarikh-Waqai-Kashmiri*. He also completed a translation of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. Mulla Hafiz Baghdadi and Mulla Parsa were two foreign scholars engaged to teach at the University. Mulla Gazi Jamaluddin, who was leading a quiet life at the monastery of Khanqah-i-Maulla or the Shah Hamdan mosque, was appointed the Chief Justice of the realm.

Other Scholars

The Sultan evinced keen interest in the study of Sanskrit and patronised Hindu scholars. Amongst the Hindus, Jona Raja, who carried on the work of Kalhana and brought out the second volume of the *Raj Tarangini* in Sanskrit, was the Sultan's favourite. The third volume of the *Raj Tarangini*, which covers the contemporary period of Zain-ul-Abdin's reign mentions the names of Tilakcharya, the Buddhist ; Shivabhatt ; Srimana Karpurabhatta, the physician ; Ruppabhatta, the astronomer ; Simha, the astrologer ; and Shri Ramananda, who wrote the exposition of the Mahabhashya, as those who enjoyed the patronage of the King. These celebrities cannot be identified with any certainty. One Uddhabhatta, who had gone to Maharashtra during the reign of Suhabhatta and studied there the *Atharva-Veda*, returned to Kashmir at the invitation of Siryabhatta and started the study of that *Veda* in the land. A copy of the *Atharva-Veda* was also presented to the King, who, in order to increase its popularity, established schools to train the scholars.

A Hindu, named Soma, also held a high place in the court, translated works from Sanskrit into Persian and vice-versa. The Sultan himself composed two works in Persian. The first was a treatise in the form of questions and answers on the manufacture of fireworks; the second a poem, *Shikayat* or plaint, written during his old age is one which has a tinge of sadness and disillusionment induced by the feuds among his own sons. Another Hindu, named Bodhibutt, was known for his wit and humour. It was his duty to recite daily to the Sultan portions from the famous epic *Shahnama*.

Zain-ul-Abdin spent large sums of money in collecting rare books from far and near and getting them translated. He founded a library, one of the biggest in the Islamic world of that century. During his last years, which were unhappy because of the dissensions in his family, the Sultan consoled himself with the study of the philosophy of the *Yoga-Vashishta.* He shut himself up in a room and spent his days in hearing from Srivara the *Mokshopaya*, or the message of Hindu philosophy, as a panacea for all ills and misfortunes of this earthly life.

Sanskrit and Persian

Though Persian had been introduced as the official language of the court, Sanskrit was not neglected. The Brahmins and Pandits were encouraged to learn and use Persian. The introduction of Persian in the Court thus divided the Kashmiri Brahmins into three categories :—

(*i*) The *Karkuns* or those who entered official life;
(*ii*) The *Bachabattas*, who performed the functions of priesthood ; and
(*iii*) The Pandits who devoted themselves to Sanskrit learning.

To Zain-ul-Abdin also goes the credit of laying down the foundations of the indigenous Kashmiri literature. Under his inspiration, the Kashmiri genius flowered profusely and the mystic sayings and verses of the time were compiled in a collection, the *Rishinama*, by the great contemporary Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, popularly known as Baba "Nund Rishi." Utta-Soma and Yuddhabhatta wrote biographies of the Sultan in the language of the country while Bhattavatara, who is said to have studied the *Shahnama*, wrote the *Zaina Vilasa*—a dramatic work dealing with an interesting episode in the Sultan's life.

Sharda Script

But a study of the evolution of local Kashmiri literature, the spoken language of the people, throws much interesting light on the process of its synthesis. Originally a *Prakrit* form of Sanskrit, it was written in the pure Sharda script, now practically defunct. It was enriched by Persian diction during the Muslim period and has been markedly influenced by Urdu during the modern period.

The earliest specimen of this Kashmiri literature available to us is the *Mahayney Prakash* of Rajnaka Siti Kantha, placed by scholars as belonging to the thirteenth century. Lately, however, a definite literary interest has developed towards this literature and attempts are being made to enrich it scientifically. A large number of Persian and Sanskrit words—either in their pure form or as modified by popular usage—has found its way in the vast vocabulary of the Kashmiri language, thereby showing that the Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims have throughout their history evinced a marked tendency to evolve a common outlook on life and an analogous spiritual attitude of mind.

The free use of words such as *apavitra*, *asha*, *upavas*, *prabhat*, *kesha*, *sundari*, *sankalpa*, *snan*, *sheesh*, *sadhu*, *shatru*, *yauvan*, *harsha*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *nasha*, *tyaga*, *nirmal*, *dhyan* and *raj-hansa*, shows that Sanskrit language and Hindu culture even now form the fundamental basis of the present-day dialect as well as the habits of thought of the Kashmiri people as a whole.

But, while the purely local literature of the Kashmiris made a marked advance in its growth and development, the older literary traditions of Sanskrit did not completely loose their hold, and mystic thoughts and ideas peculiar to the indigenous Shaivite philosophy still dominated the medieval literature. This is very well illustrated by the works of Lal Shuri or the famous

Lalla Ded, who lived in the 14th century A.D. She could, indeed, be regarded as a link between the classical Sanskrit traditions of the past and the Persian poetic patterns of the more recent times. In Lal Ded's personality, we can find the two streams of thought and culture mingled together—the Sanskrit and the Persian. Among the important Sanskrit works of this period, mention may be made of Jagadhar Bhatt's *Stuti Kusumanjali* (1350 A.D.), Siti Kantha's *Bal Bodhini* (1475 A.D.), Vallabha Dev's *Padyavali* (1550 A.D.), and Sivapadhyaya's *Vijhana Bhairav* (1775 A.D.).

Other Chroniclers

The task of writing the connected history of Kashmir was later continued by other chroniclers. After Jona Raja and Mulla Ahmad, this work of writing the history of Kashmir was taken up by the Sanskrit scholar, Shrivara, who continued the narrative upto the accession of Fateh Shah in 1486 A.D. The last of the ancient chronicles, *Rajavalipataka* brings the record down to 1586 A.D., when Kashmir was conquered by Akbar.

In the time of Akbar, Prajya Bhatt (1575 A.D.), a Brahmin scholar, resumed the task of bringing the history upto his time. Akbar's was another illustrious example of a great ruler trying to encourage classical Sanskrit literature, although Persian was the official language of the court.

After Akbar's reign there have been a number of chroniclers—Haider Malik (1659 A.D.), Narain Kaul (1710 A.D.) Mohammed Azam (1747 A.D.) and Birbal Kachru (1850 A.D.), who wrote a chronological account of Kashmir's history. Amongst the modern writers, mention may be made of Pirzada Hasan, Prakash Ram, Pandit Hargopal Kaul and Munshi Mohammad-ud-Din Fauq. Of these, Pirzada Hasan's narrative is comparatively the most trustworthy and precise.

LITERARY HERITAGE

Talented Poets

If one were to trace the growth and rapid development of the literature in Kashmir, one would find that its history during the Muslim, Mughal, Afghan and Sikh periods has essentially been the history of Persian literature. A marked feature of this long period has been that not only. Muslims but even Hindus took to the study of Persian and showed remarkable talent in its mastery. While the name of Mohammad Tahir Gani, who flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb, stands pre-eminent in the galaxy of Persian poets, that of Munshi Bhawani Das Kachru, who lived in the reign of the Afghans, is no less important. His new style in Persian prosody, manifested in the *Bahar-i-Tavil*, is held in high esteem. The names of other Kashmiri Pandits who wrote in Persian may also be mentioned. Taba Ram Turki "Betab" (1840 A.D.) is remembered for his *Jang Nama* which stands in the same category as the *Shah Nama* of Firdausi. From a literary point of view Pandit Raj Kaul Arzebegi's *Dairi* (1887 A.D.) is second only to that of Gani. Finally, mention must be made of the name of Pandit Raj Kak Dhar "Farrukh" a great literary figure who died early in Maharaja Gulab Singh's reign.

But even when Persian was adopted as the medium of expression by the Kashmiri poets and writers, verses were modelled on Persian metres, and references were borrowed from classical Persian literature, their thought and form had a certain fundamental unity which was essentially discernible. Whether Muslim or Hindu, the Kashmiri poet or writer, could not remain indifferent to the indigenous traditions of the past and to the appeal of his surroundings. While delving deep into the classical Persian romances of the legendary age, they were reminded of their own common inspirations and common heritage. Even the Kashmir lyricists—like Haba Khatoon, Arnimal and Roopa Bhawani, the three famous poetesses of the medieval period, combined the indigenous appeal of their country's folklore with that of Persia's popular legends. Persian tales of "Khusru and Shirin" and "Yusuf and Zulaikha" were, no doubt, favourite themes with Kashmiri *litterateurs*. But how beautifully they combined those themes with the indigenous ones, and what vigour and homogeneity they could weave in this synthetic whole! In the midst of love-songs of Persian heroes and heroines, we find them echoing and re-echoing the love-lyrics of "Bombure and Lolare," "Himal and Nagrai," and the *Bulbul* and the *Myna*. Their songs are songs in praise of orioles and turtle-doves, of narcissuses and daffodils, of hyacinths and saffron-blossoms. Could there be a richer synthesis of romantic fancy and legend?

Modern Period

Coming then to the modern period, the literary scene is dominated by Mahmud Gani (1855 A.D.), author of a Kashmiri version of *Panj Ganj* and Persian romances; Wali Ullah Mattu, who wrote the legend of "Himal and Nagray"; Pir Maqbool Shah Kralwari, who wrote the romance "Gulrez"; and Wahab Pare who re-told the *Shah Nama* of Firdausi in Kashmiri. Another modern is Rasul Mir, who excels even Mahmud Gani in certain aspects. The most famous among the Hindus are Parmanand, the author of the Puranic and epic episodes like *Sudama Charita*, and his disciples Lakshman, Prakash Ram and Krishan Das. Of those who carried forward the tradition of mystical verse, Aziz Darvesh and Wahab Khan deserve special mention.

Of the more recent times, mention may be made of Abdul Ahad Azad and Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur, whose songs and verses have been characterized by deep love for the motherland as well as joy in Nature's colourful phenomena. Arif, Assi and Nadim are the inspired singers of New Kashmir. In their songs and verses are represented the various literary influences and powerful movements that have influenced Kashmir's cultural and literary past.

6

THE WANDERING MINSTREL

THE thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are a period of literary revival in the history of Kashmir. It was the time when Hindu society was disintegrating and classical Sanskrit traditions of the past were entering a period of rapid decline. Persian thought and culture had by then come into vogue and had become of paramount interest to Kashmiri *litterateurs*. Yet the old inspiration had not entirely died away.

A truly representative figure of this transitional period of Kashmir's Renaissance was Laleshwari, affectionately called by the people Lal Ded or Lalla Arifa or Granny Lalla. Born in the sixties or seventies of the fourteenth century, very little is known about her early life or family, except what little has come down to us in the form of legends and stories, fables and folklore of Kashmir.

Lal Ded came of a fairly well-to-do family and was married into a Brahmin household. It is believed that her mother-in-law was very cruel and that Lal Ded was ill-treated. Her personal comforts were completely ignored, and she had often to go without meals. Her husband too was not kindly disposed towards her. Her domestic life was far from happy. Disappointments in love and domestic life turned Lal Ded into an ascetic and she became a wandering minstrel. According to some, Lal Ded was a born mystic and a *Yogini* and it was a blunder on the part of her parents to have married her at all, thereby throwing her at the mercy of a husband and a mother-in-law, who, as was natural, expected from her behaviour in conformity with the established social practices.

A Devout Philosopher

After much suffering, however, Lal Ded had to leave her home and roam about from place to place. Wandering from village to village, she came under the influence of the Shaivite saint, Sidh-Bey, who became her spiritual preceptor. He was instrumental in initiating her into the Shaivite sect. Lal Ded became a devout follower of the indigenous Trika Philosophy and her thoughts and ideas turned increasingly towards mysticism.

Existence in Bliss

According to Lal Ded, a follower of the *Yoga* system could enter into the highest mental absorption—the abode of the *Parama Shiva* or the Pure Spirit—only by losing "all consciousness of limited individuality" and becoming "absorbed in the Supreme as the limitless Pure Consciousness—consciousness of mere existence in bliss." Thus :

"The holy books disappearing, the
mystic formula remains ;
The mystic formula vanishing,
Mind alone is left ;
The void (the apparent) merges into
the void (the Transcendent)."

* * * * *

Evolution through Discipline

But this process of spiritual evolution lies through strict discipline. Lal Ded mastered the *Shat-Chakras* or the six seats of energies, and attained to the *Sahasrara* or the seventh, the highest, situated in the brain.

"When I had passed beyond the
six forests, the Moon awoke for me ;
The objective world froze within me,
When I held in the breath ;

With the blazing fire of love I
parched my heart,
And thus alone did I realise
Shankara, (the Pure Spirit).".

* * * *

Self-Denial and Renunciation

Lal Ded was an ascetic and preached self-denial and purity of life. Renunciation or non-attachment forms the key-note of all her teachings. Only when one has controlled the senses and secured freedom from "desire, lust and pride," and thus purified oneself, can one attain the Supreme Bliss :

"All impurities within me I burnt away,
And I did slay my heart.
I came to be known as the pious Lalla,
Only when I cleaved unto Him there ;
Only when I sat, just there, waiting for His Grace."

* * * * *

"Mere 'vain wanderings' will not avail :
If, in the flux of time thy hankering thou destroy,
Choose thou then a life at home or choose a
hermitage!"

For,

"Some have abandoned home and
Some the forest abode ;
What use a hermitage if thou controllest not
thy mind"?

Lal Ded herself describes her personal experiences in these words :

"Every moment I taught Omkar to the mind,
I was myself reading and myself hearing.
From So'ham (I and He) I cut off aham (I am),
Then did I, Lalla, reach the place of illumination."

* * * *

Shaiva Yoga

Lal Ded composed and recited verses in accord with her philosophy and soon became a popular poetess. Her hymns and verses which have been compiled in *Lalla Vakyani* are valuable for two reasons: they are the oldest extant specimens of Kashmiri language and represent the teachings of Kashmir's religious system—*Shaiva Yoga*, as it found expression in a popular form. She repeated the message that the final stage in man's spiritual evolution is communion with God—the complete subjugation of man's will, intellect and emotion, which alone can lead him to the highest bliss. The way to this eternal beatitude, according to Lal Ded, lies through intense devotion to God, and leads to essential unity with the Ultimate Reality. There is a deep religious passion and fervour in her verses :—

"With an untwisted thread I am towing a boat
on the ocean ;
Would that God heard my prayer and brought me
safe across !
Like water in pots of unbaked clay, I waste away,
I have a longing keen: would that I were to reach
my home !"

* * * *

"At the early dawn I got up and sang to the mad
one ;
And soothed his pain with the love of God ;
Trying to realise I am Lalla, I am Lalla,
I awakened my love,
And became one with Him; and Ten were purified."

* * * *

"Searching and seeking Him, I, Lalla wearied
myself,
And even beyond my strength I strove ;
Then, looking for Him, I found his doors closed
and latched.
This deepened my longing and stiffened my resolve;

And I would not move but stood where I was,
full of longing and love, I gaze on Him."

And again

"Passionate, with longing in my eyes,
searching wide and seeking nights and days,
Lo! I beheld the Truthful One, the Wise,
Here in mine own House to fill my gaze.
That was the day of my lucky star,
Breathless, I held him my Guide to be."

* * * *

Pathos

There is deep pathos in the allegorical description of the ordeals passed through by Lal Ded.

"I, Lal, started forth in the hope of
blooming like a cotton-flower,
But the cleaner and the carder
dealt me many a kick;
The spinning-woman spun up out of me
a gossamer-thread,
And when the washer-woman dashed me
upon the washing-stone,
And profusely rubbed me with
the fuller's earth and soap;
And the tailor plied his scissors
upon me piece by piece
Then did, I, Lal, attain to the highest
state of wisdom."

* * * *

No Religious Bigot

But what is important in Lal Ded's verses is her condemnation of rituals; she takes the positive stand that love and sincerity are the core of religion. She was no religious bigot. She recognised the essential oneness of all religions. Her primary desire was to get freedom from the throes of worldly existence—*i.e.*, the cycle of re-birth. She was willing to let any one of the divinities help her to attain this end, "whether it be *Shiva*, or *Kesava* (Vishnu), or *Kamala-Janatha* (Brahma) or *Jina* (the deity of the Buddhists or the Jainas)".

Lal Ded came at a period when the influence of Muslim thought on Hindu philosophy was considerable. Tradition relates that she was not only a contemporary but even a friend of the Muslim saint Sayyid Ali Hamdani, popularly called Shah Hamdan, who came to Kashmir in 1380 A.D. and remained there till 1386 A.D. To Lal Ded all religions were essentially alike in their fundamentals. This was clearly the influence of Islam on her mind. It impressed on her philosophical mind the notions of equality and brotherhood of man as well as of the oneness of God. She wrote:

" By whatever name the worshipper may call the Supreme, He is still the Supreme, and He alone can give release."

The Great Reality

The cardinal principle she lays stress on is that all beliefs are thoughts about one Reality alone and that all modes of worship or devotion are expressive of that Reality.

"*Idol is of stone, temple is of stone ;*
Above (temple) and below (idol) are one ;
Which of them wilt thou worship, O foolish Pandit?
Cause thou the union of mind and soul."

* * * *

"*The same stone is in the road and in the pedestal:*
The same stone is the sacred place :
The same stone is the turning mill ;
Shiva is difficult to be attained, take a hint for guidance (from thy Guru)."

Lal Ded welcomed all castes and creeds into her fold and preached mutual respect between the Hindus and the Muslims and the high and the low. God is the

God of the Hindus as well as of the Muslims and the differences of caste or creed, birth or position are merely superficial:

"The time is coming when seven generations will
sink to hell,
When untimely showers of rain and dust will fall,
When plates of flesh and wine-cups
Brahmins and sweepers will take together."

* * * *

Message of the Age

It is easy to conceive that Lal Ded, having been under the influence of Sayyid Ali Hamdani, should, like him, have absorbed the message and spirit of the age to which they both belonged. This is revealed in the following utterances ascribed to her:—

"*Atma Swarup* is the true way of realising the true God, *Parmatma-Swaroop*."

"God is omnipotent and omnipresent. Give up fanaticism and narrow communal outlook; and do not observe any distinctions between a Hindu and a Muslim. If you are endowed with wisdom, you should then realise God."

A Dancing Ascetic

Lad Ded not only preached but practised her philosophy. Her popularity was founded on her reputation as a dancing ascetic, as also on her ability to express in song and verse the teachings of Shaiva Yoga. Her ability to do so in the language of the people had an immediate appeal to the unlettered masses. She preached a universal philosophy but expressed her thoughts in the simple language of her people and clothed her ideas with similes and examples drawn from everyday experiences of life. She was thus a universal being and her thoughts were for all mankind and for all time. Herein lies the permanent value of Lal Ded's mystic verses and wise sayings, for, unlike her predecessors, who propagated and taught the doctrine of Shaiva Yoga in abstruse and technical language, Lal Ded illustrated the philosophy of religion in a simple and popular style.

Her dancing has vanished with her and so has the echo of her song. But the religion of Yogic Philosophy which she expounded to the common folk in popular expressions remains fresh to this day. Her poetry is woven in poetic imagery from the fabric of the people's own idiom and familiar surroundings. She is unrivalled in Kashmiri literature for the vitality of her idiom and the terse imagery of her verse, for her passionate insight and the power to open the windows of the soul into a limitless empyrean. And, above all, it is the message of her time—that of the synthesis of Islamic and Hindu thought on the social and spiritual planes—that remains permanent. People of Kashmir and particularly the rural masses even to this day sing the songs of Lalla.

7

THE MYSTIC SAINT

THE influence of Islamic thought and culture on the social and spiritual life of India has been profound and significant. But the most remarkable feature of this influence has been that the various thought-currents that entered India were not only Indianised, but were assimilated in the indigenous ancient culture, which being virile and broad-based, continued to inspire a sense of unity amidst such variety and diversity.

One of these thought-currents, which became quite popular in India during the medieval ages, was the cult of the *Walis* or the saints. It was then ordained that a Muslim mystic, in order to tread the path of God, must have a spiritual guide or a teacher with whose help he may, through successive stages, be led to attain the ultimate goal of enlightenment. Thus it was that the Sheikh or the *Pir*, according to the Sufi order, regulated and guided the spiritual and moral conduct of his disciple and expected in return complete obedience to his teachings. Only when the disciple became merged with his Master and lost his "self" in him, could a disciple finally be one with God—the Higher Self. This companionship with the Holy Men, or the service of Sheikhs and *Pirs*, which developed in Islamic mysticism and became a marked feature of the socio-religious life of medieval India, was a direct result of the impact of Islamic thought on Hindu philosophy.

The Devotional Cult

This process of assimilation, however, led to the revival of the devotional cult or the religious movement in the 10th and 11th century A.D., inspiring a number of learned men to become religious teachers and reformers in response to its call. In the intensity of the religious stir and commotion, which prevailed first in the south and then in the north, these spiritual reformers and teachers won a number of personal devotees and disciples, who sat at the feet of their masters, to be initiated into the new movement. In course of time, they came to be worshipped and venerated by the Hindu masses in the same way as the Muslim saints and recluses were in Islam. Hindu *Sadhus* and *Sanyasis* occupied the same exalted position in the Hindu set-up as the Muslim *Sheikhs* and *Pirs* did among the Muslims. This process of interaction did not stop there: it went far deeper and changed the very outlook of sections of the people. It united both the Hindus and the Muslims on a higher metaphysical plane. The Hindus began to worship the Muslim *Auliyas* and *Pirs* while the Muslims began to show similar reverence to the Hindu *Sadhus* and *Sanyasis*. Its climax was reached in the cult of *Satya-Pir*, (*Satya-Pir* is a compound word: *Satya*, a Sanskrit word, and *Pir*, an Arabic word), founded by Hussain Shah of Bengal, and aimed at uniting the Hindus and the Muslims under one single form of worship of a common deity.

"Nund Rishi"

It was during this particular phase of India's cultural and spiritual movement, that there was born in the Valley of Kashmir the famous Muslim saint, Nur-ud-din, popularly known as "Nund Baba" or "Nund Rishi", and to the Hindus of the Valley he is still known as Sahajanand. His shrine which lies at Tsrar Sharif, is sacred to Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir alike and thousands of either community go on annual pilgrimage to this place.

But no account of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din's life can be complete without the mention of the name of his patron and contemporary, Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin. The Sultan and the Sheikh were the two representative figures of this age and represented in their actions and teachings the very message and spirit of their epoch. For, while the former established unity and harmony in the political sphere and treated his Hindu subjects as affectionately as the Muslims, the latter preached a gospel of love and devotion and laid the foundations of spiritual and cultural unity. The former worked on the social and political plane, the latter on the spiritual and metaphysical. But their message was essentially the same: a common aspiration for peace and love moved their souls. To the Kashmiris today, the former remains immortalised in *Zaina Charita* and *Zaina Vilas* composed by the Hindu scholars Soma Bhatta and Udh Bhatt respectively, while the latter occupies an unforgettable place in their lives because of an immensely popular collection of his sayings and verses *Rishinama*.

A Humble Birth

Nothing definite is known about Sheikh Nur-ud-Din's birth or ancestry. He is believed to have been born at Kemu, 16 miles south-west of Srinagar, in the year 786 Hijri. It is said that his great-grandfather was ruler of Kishtwar and was killed during a civil strife in his domain. His son, the grandfather of the Sheikh, ran away from Kishtwar and took to a warrior's life under one of the local Rajas of Kashmir near Tsrar. He too was killed in warfare and left his son, Sheikh Salar, the father of the Sheikh, alone and helpless. Sheikh Salar, however, soon came in contact with the famous Syed Hussain Samnani, who converted him to his sect and gave him shelter and patronage.

Having thus stabilised his position, the story goes, Sheikh Salar married a lady, who was highly talented and beautiful. Her name was Sudrae and later on she came to be known as Sudrae-Maje.

Sheikh Nur-ud-Din was born of her. His mother gave him a humble name—Nundah—quite popular among the village-folk of Kashmir. Later on, Mir Mohammad Hamdani named him Nur-ud-Din. Sheikh Nur-ud-Din is his formal name, yet to the millions of Kashmiris he will always be known as "Nundah Resh" or "Nunda Rishi."

Lover of Quiet Solitude

Sheikh Nur-ud-Din had no formal education. As a child, education imparted in the schools had no attraction for him and he spent most of his time in quiet solitude. In this way, he grew up with hardly any interest in earthly life, and was always absorbed in deep thought and meditation.

As he grew up and reached manhood, he was duly married and had children. But how could such a man be reconciled to this mode of life? As was to be expected, he soon became sullen and gloomy. He had come to believe in a life of self-denial and renunciation and took to living in piety and solitude in caves and jungles. He had, as it were, received his initiation and he now renounced the world. At the young age of 30, he had taken to a life of a wandering mystic.

Sheikh Nur-ud-Din ceased to take any interest in the ways of the world. He was no longer part of the life that surrounded him. His behaviour seemed strange: when, on the eve of a journey, his mother presented to him the usual symbolic gifts—a rope, a stalk of hay and a piece of wood—he declined to accept them, saying: "O Mother, if this be my wherewithal for such a short journey, what can you provide for my life's journey to death?"

Man of Miracles

Popular legends attribute many miracles to Sheikh Nur-ud-Din. One of the legends has it that Sheikh Nur-ud-Din's mother made repeated entreaties to her son to give up this mode of life and take care of his wife and children, but to no avail. One day, she came to his cave and severely rebuked him for his negligence of filial duty and told him that his children had no one to look after them and they had nothing to eat. But she failed to persuade her son to give up this life of an ascetic recluse. His mother, however, would not give in and tauntingly reminded him of how she had fed him and reared him up with her own blood in the form of milk and how he was now proving ungrateful to her; to which the holy man responded by beckoning a nearby rock to give back to his mother all the milk he had had from her. Soon milk began to flow from the rock. The mother returned to the attack and told him that all his flesh and bones, in fact his whole body, was built up with the milk and nourishment she had given him. The holy man then left his body dead and prostrate at the feet of his mother, while his soul soared up towards heaven, returning back to the body only after the mother had implored him passionately to come back to life.

There are other stories also of attempts made to trap the Sheikh into temptations by beautiful damsels, all of which failed. These have been woven into a large mass of folklore and legend associated with his name and activities.

Message of the Soul

These stories and legends apart, Sheikh Nur-ud-Din was a great mystic philosopher, who, in his sayings and doings, had risen high above the life that was common in the courts and social and religious institutions of those days. He was no common religious recluse, and did not play to the whims and caprices of a tyrant or a monarch, howsoever powerful and popular he might be. Nor did he submit to the social institutions and established practices of his day. His was a message of the soul beating in unison with the heart and he spoke for mankind as a whole. He was not of the earth nor even of any particular race or country. He belonged to the universe, and his message was universal. He clothed his thoughts and ideas with popular similes and examples. He spoke with remarkable spontaneity in the simple language of his age.

Wise Sayings and Verses

Though dead centuries ago, the legends and stories of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din's pious deeds are still fresh in the minds of Kashmiris. Allusions to his sayings and verses by the rural masses of Kashmir are quite common even today and have become almost proverbial. The *Rishinama*, the famous work in which are compiled the wise sayings of this holy man, is as familiar a work to the people of Kashmir as any other epic.

In the verses of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, there is deep mystic thought and philosophy. Love and intense devotion to God forms the basis of his utterances. Here is an example of his verse :

"The lover is he who burns with love,
Whose Self doth shine like gold.
When man's heart lights up with the flame of love
Then shall he reach the Infinite.

* * * * *

"Love is death of an only son to a mother—
Can the lover have any sleep ?
Love is venomous stings of a swarm of wasps—
Can the lover have any rest ?
Love is a robe dripping with blood—
Can the wearer even utter a sigh ?"

Four Disciples

The Sheikh died at Mauza Chirag in the year 842 Hijri, when he was 63. He had a number of disciples who also won reputation for sanctity and came to be revered by the Kashmiris. Of his four disciples, Baba Nasir-ud-Din, Hazrat Baba Bam-ud-Din, Sheikh Zain-ud-Din and Baba Latif-ud-Din, Baba Nasir-ud-Din was his favourite disciple and most of the master's verses and sayings are addressed to him. Baba Nasir-ud-Din also became very popular with the masses and was given the affectionate name of "Nusru". The following is the best-known verse addressed by the master to the disciple :

"The body exposed to the cold river winds blowing,
Thin porridge and half-boiled vegetable to eat—
There was a day, O Nasaro.
"My spouse by my side and a warm blanket to cover us,
A sumptuous meal and a fish to eat—
There was a day, O Nasaro."

* * * * *

A King Leads the Funeral

Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, on his death, was bestowed all the royal honours and his burial took place with great dignity. Zain-ul-Abdin, the benevolent king, led the prayers himself for the everlasting peace and liberation of the Sheikh's soul.

Sheikh Nur-ud-Din's shrine, popularly called Tsrar Sharif, is intact to this day and is a place of pilgrimage for all Kashmiris irrespective of their caste and creed. Thousands of devotees throng to this holy place to invoke the blessings of the dead saint and to pray for the fulfilment of their fondly cherished hopes and desires. An annual fair, held at this shrine during the autumn months, is an occasion for great festivity and rejoicing.

The shrine is both a mausoleum and a residential building for the pilgrims. In a separate house nearby are preserved the relics of the Saint, which are the objects of worship and reverence by all. This shrine at Tsrar Sharif is symbolic today; it is the symbol of the cultural and spiritual harmony which has enriched Kashmir's social and cultural life all through the ages.

8

THE ROYAL LYRICIST

LIKE the songs in Braja Bhasha, the Kashmiri songs and lyrics possess certain qualities which have lent them a peculiar touch of sweetness and melody. Many of these lyrics and songs, deep in thought and in sensitive depiction of human emotions, are the work of poetesses who have enriched the literary traditions of Kashmir and left a literary heritage for posterity.

While the earliest phase of Kashmiri poetry, in the 13th and 14th centuries, was dominated by the mystic songs of Lal Ded and Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, the centuries that followed saw the perfection of *lol* or love-lyric in Kashmiri literature. The *lol* is a short poem, generally the expression of a single mood—most frequent of those moods is the one resulting from a blending of love and the unattainable yearning for it. The *lol* is rarely more than six to ten lines in length, including the first two lines which form the refrain of the song. In addition to being recited as poetry it is also sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments peculiarly indigenous to Kashmir. The *lol* has a flexibility of rhythm and a varied stress that makes it an expressive medium for a large number of moods. Its stress accent helps the metre to convey the subtle rhythms of lyric moods.

Ravishing Charm

Of the many known and unknown writers of *lol* lyrics in Kashmir, Haba Khatoon and Arnimal stand out most prominently. Haba Khatoon is the most romantic figure in the history of Kashmiri literature. Humble of origin, from a peasant-woman she was destined to be the Queen of King Yusuf Shah Chak (1579-1586 A.D.).

In the music of her songs she enshrined the precious memories of her childhood and the exuberant moments of her youth. Her music is still upon the lips of the Kashmiri village-folk who have woven round her name romantic tales which make Haba Khatoon's reputation almost legendary.

Time has not dulled the freshness of her songs or the richness of her personality. Haba Khatoon continues to be the cherished poetess of Kashmiri lyrics. She was a versatile person who combined in herself both charm and talent. She was a singer and a musician, and founded a School of Music in Srinagar which keeps her memory alive still.

After her marriage with King Yusuf Shah, Haba Khatoon had ample opportunities to develop her musical talents. She invited to the Royal Palace musicians and singers from different places. A musician of no mean achievement, she mastered even the difficult musical scales of Iranian music and herself evolved a new style of music called *Rast* in Kashmiri.

Legends and romances have come to be associated with her name. There is a graceful-looking hillock on the bend of the Kishenganga river near Gurez, which has been named after her as Haba Bal. The simple folk of Gurez still dwell upon stories about her life and her supposed residence on this hill, where she is believed to have spent a considerable part of her last years. Fatigued and enfeebled though she was, she wandered away from this place too. Returning to Panda Chuk, three miles south of Srinagar she built a small hut for herself. And here she died. In Srinagar, the "Haba Kadal", the second bridge over the Jhelum, named after her, stands to this day as a memorial to the popular lyricist.

Early Life

Haba Khatoon lived in the sixteenth century. The exact date of her birth is unknown. She was born of a peasant family in the middle of the 16th century in the picturesque little village of Chanda Har, just eight miles south of Srinagar, famed for its saffron fields. She speaks about herself thus:

"I left my home for play but returned not
when the day sank in the West.
I came of noble parentage
and made a name as Haba Khatoon.
I passed through crowds drawing tight my veil,
But people flocked to see me,
And ascetics hurried out of woods;
When the day sank in the West."

Her father Abdul Rather, according to tradition, sent her to a local school attached to a mosque to be educated in the reading and reciting of the Holy *Quran*. But Haba Khatoon would not confine herself to the set curriculum of the *Maktab* and started reading the works of Persian poets, particularly Sheikh Sadi's *Karima*, *Gulistan* and *Bostan*. She also made an analytical study of well-known Kashmiri poets. As a school-girl, she composed verses, which could not help attracting admiration and encouragement. Her school-teacher and village-folk considered her a prodigy and her fame spread far beyond her native place.

An Unhappy Marriage

But Haba Khatoon's parents did not want the child to be a poetess or a singer. That was something contrary to family traditions. She was, therefore, married at an early age to a peasant boy. Haba's parents had imagined that marriage would have a sobering effect on her, but that was not to be. Haba Khatoon's gift for verse and music brought on her the wrath of her mother-in-law, who forbade her from singing love-songs, as contrary to womanly modesty. Her husband, too, who was illiterate and unimaginative, chided her for thus bringing disrepute to the family. Prohibited from singing in her own home, she would sing whenever she got an opportunity, in the open fields and on river banks or while on the way to collect wild plants in the company of her girl friends She would sing :

"Come, friends, let us to banks and braes,
To gather yellow-flowered dandelion,
Silently and stealthily,
Without a word of warning, he did steal away from me.
Dear, Come, O Come to me!
They know it all, they know
And now talk ill of me,
In rumour and in gossip rude.
When will the tangled web of fate unravelled be?
Dear, come, O come to me!"

Persecution

Haba Khatoon was persecuted in the name of social conventions. She suffered the agony and pain of her life, but she could not suppress the inner urge in her—the urge of a born poet. Her lyrics are touching and personal; intentionally emotional too. She sings for instance :

"In henna I dyed my hands,
When will he come?
Its's love should come to me, bedecked.
Come, still my craving,
I am dying for thee :
Without thee how shall I fill my days?
I cannot endure separation from thee."

* * * *

"The distant meadows are in bloom,
Hast thou not heard my plaint?
Flowers bloom on mountain lakes,

Come, let us to mountain meads;
The lilac blooms in distant woods,
Hast thou not heard my plaint?"

* * * * *

"In quest of thee I'll wander about the hill-streams,
Shall I find thee nowhere, my Love?
I will search the wild jasmine woods for thee,
Shall I not meet thee once again, my Love?
The wild rose is in bloom,
Wilt thou not come to me, my Love?
Beauty's fairest paragons are in their prime,
Shall I find thee nowhere, my Love?

* * * * *

"The sweat is dripping like pearls from my brow
I am gathering violets for my Love;
At Shalimar *I am filling wine-cups*
And leap for joy, for Love will come to me;
I am weaving garlands of flowers for Love
At Ishabar *I am filling goblets of wine;*
And braid my tresses, for Love will come to me;
I am weaving garlands of flowers for him."

* * * * *

Haba Khatoon's verse is melodious, for she was both a poetess and a musician.

Passionate Lyrics

Haba Khatoon's life was unhappy, all the more so because she was unable to adjust herself to the conventions of a conservative society. But the common people flocked to have a glimpse of her face as she sang in the fields. Village belles lilted her love-laden songs; musicians and singers chanted of her beauty and charm. Haba Khatoon's fame travelled fast and she could not help but attract the attention of the community.

A King Takes Fancy

But fortune smiled on Haba Khatoon. Disgusted and tired of the miserable life she was forced to lead, she paid a visit to a renowned *faqir* Khwaja Masud. He prophesied that her days of woe would soon be ended. Indeed, he even gave her a new name, Zooni or the Moon, by which Kashmir and India know her today.

It so happened that one day, while she was singing in the company of her friends, King Yusuf Shah Chak, passing that way, observed her. They looked into each other's eyes. It was love at first sight!

The King sang:

"A village damsel has enthralled the world,
The season of love has begun."

Haba Khatoon replied, airily singing:

"But my King, the shadows of night are approaching,
And my Lord is alone at home and I must repair."

* * * * *

But the King was soon to be her Lord. She was now the lady of a King's dreams. A divorce was swiftly arranged on payment of a sum of 5,000 drams to Haba Khatoon's former husband. A peasant girl became the Queen of Kashmir. The *faqir's* prophesy was fulfilled.

Fortune had smiled on her—but for a short while only. In 1586 A.D. King Yusuf Shah Chak was captured by Raja Bhagwan Das and imprisoned by Akbar. Though released after some time, he was not permitted to return to Kashmir. Thus came to an end the romantic career of the royal lyricist and the supreme happiness that came to her could not be hers for long. Haba Khatoon spent her last days in a lonely search: she abandoned the Royal Palace and became an ascetic, waiting for her "lord" to return. From morn till eve, she wandered endlessly in hills and dales, on riversides and lakes, singing of gardens and of flowers, of human love and of pangs of separation.

She sang :

"Say, friend, when will fate smile on me,
And my Love come to me again ? Say When ?
I've waited long and patiently,
My heart is numb and idle and empty of hopes.
Sweet is the ritual of love
I would deck my love with ornament,
And in henna dye his hands.
I would anoint his body with fragrant kisses
And offer him wine in gold goblets.
The lotus of love which blooms in the lake of my heart,
Say, friend, when will fate smile on me ?
Go forth and call him, friend,
I've made posies of flowers for him,
Over passes high I carried him wine,
But he is roaming mid distant glades.
O, why is he roaming in far off glades ?
O, where is he drunk with my rival's wine ?
In his absence like jasmine I will fade ;
I've made posies of flowers for him."

* * * *

The closing period of Haba Khatoon's life was spent near Gurez—a period marked by intense sorrow and suffering. Exhausted and weak, she came back to Srinagar, where she died towards the close of the sixteenth century. Her grave lies unidentified and unhonoured.

9

THE FORLORN SINGER

Nearly two centuries after Haba Khatoon, another great female lyricist came on the literary scene of Kashmir in the person of Arnimal.

Arnimal's *lol*-lyrics represent more a mood or an air of a song. Their contents can rarely be separated from the quality of the music and melody which they enshrine. There is hardly anything mystical or philosophical in their themes. On the other hand, when Arnimal speaks, she talks of simple natural love, free from spiritual or mystical experience. Her love is human and earthly, not the spiritual love which we find in the songs of Laleshwari. There is more of pathos and tragedy in her love-songs than gaiety or joy of living. Her husband was Munshi Bhawani Das Kachru, himself a well-known Persian writer, whose new style of the *Bahar-i-Tavil* in Persian poetry won him immortal fame. From all accounts available to us, there seems little doubt that Arnimal was deeply hurt by her husband's maltreatment of her sensitive spirit.

Disappointment in Love

Her disappointment in love found touching appeal and expression in her lyrics. They sing of the pangs of separation and of the longing and desire for union.

She sings, for example :

"The hem of my robe is drenched with tears, Love;
Waiting and yearning my days drag.
I came bedecked ;
Prithee, why so proud, Love ?
I have become an object of taunts, ah me !
Waiting and yearning, my days drag."

"When will thy feet touch my courtyard ?
I would place them on my head, O Come !
For love, I left my home and hearth,
And tore the veil, O come !
I was a famous beauty once, amd now
I have faded in my teens, O come !"

Or again :

"For the love of my sweetheart I filled wine-cups,
Go and call out to him—
Across meadows and down hill-sides,
My tender thoughts attend him.
Like a deer he bounded away, ah me !
Go and call out to him.
Dishes of sugar-loaf and candy-sweet I filled,
Many and various—pray, offer these to him.
Smitten am I—how can I endure the anguish of Love ?
Go and call out to him."

* * * * *

Freedom and Freshness

There is another aspect to Arnimal's poetry. Arnimal was born and brought up in the urban atmosphere of the capital city of Srinagar, and the family of Bhawani Das Kachru into which she was married stayed in the neighbouring town of Rainawari. Her poetry breathes the same freedom and freshness which characterised the atmosphere of both these places. Unlike her classical predecessors, scenic beauty and the phenomenon of nature invariably recalls to Arnimal's mind the longings of a broken heart. The murmurings of a hill torrent or the blossoming of the jasmine flowers, were all phases of human love. For her, nature's beauty had no objective existence, except in hearts pining to feel the touch of love. All these beauties, therefore, made her compose and sing of the object of her own love :

"My love, my jasmine, my jasmine,
I long for thee,

Come, O Come,
I long for thee.
I plighted, when young, my troth to thee ;
Why didst thou break thy plighted troth ?
O Sweet, O Dear,
I long for thee."

Or, again :

"I weave garlands of flowers for him—
Will he not disport himself 'mid jasmine ?
For Love I filled wine-cups to the brim,
O were he to come !
In my bosom I would place him ;
And my love-lorn youth would be happy again.
Will he not disport himself 'mid jasmine—
For my sake ?"

* * * *

True Love

The sight of gardens in their full bloom and the flowers in their pink blossom hearken her back to her true love. Nature in glorious colours presents to her mind a strange contrast to her own sad plight :

"Flowers have bloomed in my father's home ;
But thou comest not and I feel like one
Accursed, alone, and mocked by all.
I battled against fate and lost—
Who can fight his fate and win ?
O what had fate in store for me ?
The jasmine blooms in my father's home,
But thou comest not and I wait in vain."

* * * *

Tenderness of Expression

Arnimal combines vivid imagery with tenderness of expression and depth of feeling.

"Hardly had I, a budding hourie, *bathed me in*
sandal oil,
When he, love, did flee from me, O friend.

Me thought I would lie in wait for him, my Lord and King.
With jasmine to crown her brow,
In the garden of my heart, a rare flower had blossomed
When, he, my Love, did flee from me, O friend."

* * * * *

Her thoughts wander deep into Nature's world and return to the sorrow in her own heart.

"I will lay the very apples of my eyes at thy feet, O Come,
My Love, companion of my youth!
When young I played with trinkets,
Fool that I was,
And did not prize my youth;
But now I pine for thee, show thyself,
My Love, companion of my youth!

* * * * *

"Like the kokil*-dove thou movest along the wandering rills,*
And thus distract my heart.
Beguiled by love, I fancied thou wert calling me,
My Love, companion of my youth.

* * * * *

"Think of the lader-posh *bloom along the rivulet banks—*
This is the time I look for thee,
Wert thou to come and show thyself,
My love, companion of my youth."

Or again:

"What can abate the ardour of my youth?
He keeps away, roaming the woods, ah me!
I was a kokil*-dove, weaving my nest*
On a bough, unconcerned and free,
When in the time of blossom and spring,
Lightning lit up a flame in me;
And the curl of his lovely locks

Whirled me in the whirlpool of love,
Ah! what can abate the ardour of my youth?"

* * * * *

Arnimal's name literally translated means "garland of arni-roses". In several of her poems, she weaves patterns out of her own name :—

"I was a full bloom summer jasmine,
But for him I've turned as pale as the arni-rose.
Say friend, when will my Love come unto me?
Say when?"

* * * * *

No Frustration

Her disappointment in love seldom turns into frustration and Arnimal is capable of even invoking a blessing for her disloyal love :—

"Friend, whom can I tell?
My rivals laugh at me since he is no
longer on speaking terms with me.
The thought that he is happy and well,
sustains me still.
I ran away from home to thee;
But thou didst knit thy brows
and spurned my love.
Still did I pray : long mayest thou live!"

* * * * *

At the Spinning Wheel

In the later part of her life, Arnimal lived with her father and took to the favourite pastime of the spinning wheel. And she sang :

"Murmur not my spinning wheel,
Thy straw-rings I will oil.
From under the sod, O Hyacinth,
Raise thy stately form;
For, look, the Narcissus is waiting
With cups of wine for thee,
Once faded, will the jasmine bloom again?"

10

MODERN LITERATURE

THE modern period of Kashmiri literature opens with a fresh and free outlook on national and cultural life. A marked feature of this period has been the beginnings of the democratic struggle in Kashmir in the wake of the freedom movement over the rest of India. As a result of this national awakening, Kashmir witnessed the rise of a new and powerful literary movement, culminating in the revival of fresh interest in local literature and arts.

This consciousness of political progress—particularly during the last two decades—has stirred the *litterateurs* of Kashmir no less than the artists. Many a varied thought-current thus entered the literary sphere of the day. Political and economic problems found a deep and abiding appeal with modern writers and poets and much of the modern Kashmiri poetry centres round the political and socio-economic themes of the day. Today the best known poets of Kashmir come from the proletariat: they have sprung from humble circumstances and have suffered from political and socio-economic exploitation. Their songs, therefore, breathe a free and revolutionary spirit as well as hold out a hope for the freedom of all classes.

The present-day Kashmiri literature is essentially in the spoken dialect of the people, which has had its roots planted deep in the fertile soil of the ancient past and which was enriched through the centuries by assimilation of all that was best in Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu Classic literature. The scope of this new literature is thus wide and varied. But it differs in many ways from the contents of the preceding periods.

MODERN LITERATURE

Poetry of Freedom

The mystic and philosophical note, which was struck during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is no longer present. Nor are the themes of spiritual or didactic message, which once inspired the medieval creative writers. Even themes focussed round human love and romance, which dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, can no longer serve as a powerful inspiration to a generation trying to build up a new social and political fabric of life. The spiritual and cultural content of present-day Kashmiri society, of which the literary movements are only a part, is the outcome of a conscious need for social and political freedom. This consciousness has led to a dynamic awakening in both artistic and literary spheres.

The contemporary literature of Kashmir breaks altogether new ground. There is less of love and romance and more of fact and reality. There is an effort to describe the trivial events in the lives of simple folk, as also their urges and emotions. This new phase of literature, a product of the accumulated experiences of the past, also depicts the mental conflicts of the present era and the fond hopes and future dreams of a politically awakened generation.

Patriotic Fervour

The modern note is first sounded in new themes introduced by Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur, whose songs and poems, imbued with deep patriotic fervour, appealed to the people of Kashmir. He also interprets through his songs the cultural background of the "New Kashmir", inspiring people to strive for its greater glory. But while it was Mahjur, who introduced the freshness of subject and outlook to interpret the awakening amongst his people, it was Abdul Ahad Azad of Rangar, Kashmir's nature poet, who by depicting the varied phenomena of nature, revealed his delight and pride in the country's beauty.

Flowers and roses in their rich garb of colours reminded Azad of his passionate love. For more than a decade Azad sang of nothing but the "tresses and moles" of his beloved whom he addressed thus:

"When didst thou bloom, my rose, my rose?
Thy robe is red; thy frame fragrant!
Looking at thee is an act of piety—"

* * * * *

Longings of Love

For long, Azad, inspired by the lovely flowers in the garden, remained entrenched in the longings and restlessness of love. He sang:

"The new-blown rose and the hyacinth
Need tending in the garden;
Be it the heat of Har *or the frost of* Poh,
What cares the Himalayan spruce?

* * * * *

"The morning breeze is restless, but
The flowers are dozing in the garden;
All vain is love's restlessness
Where there is no response!"

* * * * *

A Message of Revolt

But, love is not the consuming passion of Azad. He is capable of rising to great heights, and invoking through the despair of love, a dynamic message for action and revolution. This freshness of theme is borne out in his "Song of the River", wherein the rhythmic movement of the waters is symbolic of a call for action and revolt for freedom.

"I corrode away the heart of the hills—
Such is the momentum of my flow!

I bathe the (tender) frames of the sweet—
Such is the softness of my ways!

* * * * *

"My curves and twists are full of straightforward love,
I get the music of life in travels, and wandering
Amidst the flowers and the nightingales
I play upon the sweet Santoor!
Among the rocks—the stony hearts—
I beat the drum of upheaval!

* * * * *

"When I witness ups and downs, banks and demarcations,
I lose my temper;
I seek oneness and equality; for that
I run and foam and fret!
Hence is it that, water though I am,
I have fallen on the burning coals of the mulberry-woods!"

* * * * *

Passionate Ghazals

Azad began his poetic career, under the inspiration of Rasul Mir, whose passionate Kashmiri *ghazals* made a fervent appeal to him. Combined with a love for the *ghazal*, was Azad's aptitude for the mystic element which attracted him to Mahmud Gani's lyrics. Under the sheltering care of his father, Azad made an extensive study of the varied trends in Kashmiri literature at different stages and combined in his poetry the most progressive that he could find therein. In one of his essays entitled "Woman and Poetry" he observes: "Every revolution recasts culture and civilization in a new mould. Literature keeps pace with life and undergoes transformation at every stage of the journey; but every new literature is intimately bound up with the old one........Human life forges ever new relations, new principles........and new philosophy at every stage." To Azad, the new progressive phase of literature and poetry answered the needs of the changing times. He did not permit pessimism to creep into his writings. Instead he sounded a note of optimism in words like:

"But we need not despair. Rebels of nature have been born, are being born and will ever be born in future too. The time is coming when the world would undergo a revolutionary transformation. Hackneyed ideas and ideals will vanish away; new outlooks, new hopes and new urges will come into being........" This was his prophetic message for his down-trodden countrymen.

Fight Against Injustice

Azad refused to be cowed down or to be coerced into submission. He exhorted his people to fight against injustice, intolerance and suppression. The following lines are an echo of the democratic urge of his time:

"To become free, to end tyranny, and to abolish superstition
This is my cherished dream, this my desire and this my slogan."

And again he says:

"I have accepted the burden of ages on my head;
The angels and the heavens have shuddered at my doggedness;
I have chewed steel, I have braved fire;
I have sipped the blood of my heart;
But this my head has not, till this day,
Bent low before anyone else but Thee."

* * * * *

Crusade Against Fanaticism

Azad refused to be fanatic or communal. His songs are, in fact, a crusade against religious bigotry.

He it was who first gave a clarion-call against religious prejudices. His denunciation of religious intolerance found expression thus:

> "*The temples, mosques and such other institutions*
> *Indulge in empty drum-beatings;*
> *Their hearts are utterly devoid of love.*"

Azad rose far above religious cleavages and preached the gospel of love and universal brotherhood. He had full faith in the goodness of human nature and reiterated that any distinction between man and man would strike at the very roots of democracy; thus:

> "*Pray, announce to all the Kashmiris the*
> *secrets thou hast confided to Azad,*
> *After casting away childish frivolities of* Kufr
> *and* Deen
> *The light from the candle is for all; Hindus and*
> *Musalman*
> *In this vast expanse of Oneness*
> *Who is my kin, and who a stranger to me?*
> *A Musalman is to me as good as a Hindu;*
> *My* deen *is fraternity, my* dharma *is oneness.*
> *My light is meant for one and all......*"

* * * * *

Revolution and Patriotism

While Azad died years before his countrymen could see the fulfilment of their cherished dream, Mahjur continues to sing the themes of revolution and patriotism. His lyrics, such as "The Country Lass", "My Youth", "Arise, O Gardener" are typical of the new phase of Kashmiri literature. He rises to heights of eloquence in his poem "Our Country is a Garden"; thus:

> "*The* Bulbul *sings to the flower;*
> *'Our country is a garden.*
> *In this our lovely garden*

Flowers bloom and bloom,
Wafting abroad their fragrance.'

* * * * *

"See the flush of bloom
In orchards, woods and glades :
The Bulbul *gazes fondly*
And has his thrill of joy.

* * * * *

"Vikram *and* tekabatane
Have early come to bloom,
And buds are bursting everywhere.
The hyacinth says to the violet :
'Why dost thou hide thyself ?
Leave the wooded highlands
Come down to the fields below.'

* * * * *

"The spring has filled with symphony
Fountains and brooks and hill-streams,
Rills and waterfalls.
To fields, hills and open woods,
To hollows, glens and meads—
What glow imparts the bloom !

* * * * *

"On all sides pinnacles of snow
Like marble ramparts stand
Around a green emerald.

* * * * *

"The Bulbul *dotes on roses,*
On narcissuses the bee,
Drunk with the joy of his native land
Is the Kashmiri.

* * * * *

"Our Native land, O Mahjur,
Is verily a lovely garden,
We must love it dearly
We all must love it dearly."

* * * * *

Pride in the Past

In Mahjur's poems there is a burning love for his country's past as well as a sense of pride for its ancient greatness. Like Azad again, Mahjur reminds his people of their great heroes of old—great kings like Lalitaditya, mighty fighters like Tazi Bhatta and Zaya (Ram) Bhan, and versatile poets like Gani—all of whom shed lustre and glory upon their native land. Mahjur exhorts his people to be one and united; and preaches to them the religion of humanity. He also utters a warning against monopolisation of religious truth by priests:

> *"Listen to Mahjur, and thou wilt get the clue to highest truth;*
> *The right knowledge or wisdom does not rest with priest or other religious guides."*

All Kashmiris are one and have for centuries held that "fellow-feeling alone is the worth of a human being". Mahjur sings:

> *"There I beheld both Hindus and Muslims*
> *Bend their heads before the one......(Reality);*
> *What better news of 'the City of Love' should I report to thee?"*

* * * * *

Religious Harmony

Mahjur repeatedly lays emphasis on the familiar theme of human love and religious harmony:

> *"Who is the friend and who the foe of your (native) land?*
> *Let you among yourselves thoughtfully make out..*
> *The kind and stock of all Kashmiris is one;*
> *Let you mix milk and sugar once again.*
> *Hindus will keep the helm and Muslims ply the oars;*

Let you together row (ashore) the boat of this
country."

* * * * *

A Message for the Future

There is a hidden message for the future in his poetry. His is not poetry of love or romance alone, nor even of roses and rivers inviting lovers into their midst, but a song of the changing times. Nature's elements, the rivers, the gardens, and the mountains are invoked to answer not the call of beauty, but the call of action.

Mahjur exhorts :

"Arise, O Gardener !
Let there be a glory in the garden
Once again !
Let roses bloom again !
Let Bulbuls *sing of their love again !*
The garden in ruins,
The dew in tears,
The roses in tattered leaf—
Let roses and Bulbuls *be kindled anew with life !*

* * * * *

"Thy wailings avail thee not, O Bulbul,
Who will set thee free ?
Thy salvation thou hast to work
With thine own hands alone—
Birds of the garden are full of song
But each one strikes his own note—
Harmonize their diverse notes, O God,
Into one rousing song ! "

* * * * *

Spirit of "New Kashmir"

His verses thus embody the spirit of New Kashmir's struggle for freedom and emancipation. Mahjur inspires his suffering countrymen with the promise of a happier world when the gardens would be in full bloom and the lot of the people would be free from misery and unhappiness:

"*Thy dreary wastes shall no more lie desolate,*
A new world shall settle therein,
The deserts shall change into a flower-garden....
The thorny-poisonous bush (Arakhal) *shall get a graft of the pine;*
The willow shall get the durability of the sandalwood
The hills shall give birth to precious stones;
The ranges of thy mountains shall yield gold....
Divers shall detect rubies in the Dal,
Pearls shall emerge out of the Wular Lake."

Mahjur also assures his countrymen that

"*When the sun of the new world shall rise,*
Thy balcony shall be the first to get the glow;
And the rest of the world shall glisten later on."

* * * * *

A Warning to Exploiters

Mahjur gives a warning to the exploiters of the land that times are coming when the down-trodden would rise against tyranny and oppression and the just rights of the people would be recognised and the oppressors would better change with the changing times—else:

"*Enjoy thy opulence for a day or two* (*more*),
Soon thou shalt have to face the flood (*of democracy*)
People will then reside in thy drawing-room.
Listen, therefore, to the (*voice of*) *reality;*
Be in tune with the (*changing*) *times.*"

And when the happy era has dawned, Mahjur recalls:

"*Thou wert warbling* (*notes*) *inside the cage......*
There was the stammer of slavery in thy voice;
Forget those old tales now; sing fresh strains;
Congratulate the flowers and disport (*thyself*) *in the garden.*"

Mahjur sings of the loveliness of his country-garden, when

> *"Winter will vanish, snow will melt away, spring will come again ;*
> *Mahjur, be ready with thy symphony of love !*
> *Flowers will bloom of their own accord,*
> *Let thee just become an apparent cause."*

* * * * *

Didactic Theme

But while Azad and Mahjur sing of the beauty of their country and the happy dream of a golden future, Daya Ram Ganju, another contemporary poet, continues to sing the same didactic theme which characterised the medieval poets. He expounds :

> *"Lead me across the shoals of life, O Lord,*
> *I await thy lead,*
> *O Come ! I cry, I weep.*

* * * * *

> *"The fire of thy love is burning me,*
> *Its fury has lapped me in flames,*
> *How can it now abate ?*

* * * * *

> *"Away from Thee I wait and wane*
> *Like the westering moon ;*
> *Away from Thee I stumble and grope*
> *In the dark like the blind.*

* * * * *

> *"In the lake of my heart, lotus has blossomed*
> *And bees are swarming ;*
> *I am gathering the flowers of love*
> *To lay at Thy feet.*

* * * * *

> *"I have turned pale as the* arni-*rose,*
> *My youth and charms are fled—*
> *I long to come home to Thee.*

* * * * *

"In the bewildering jungle of world's allurements,
I hunt Thee alone as a lion doth his prey
With the hounds of my senses in hot pursuit.

* * * * *

"When, O when, shall I rock Thee
In the winged cradle of my heart?
When, O when, shall I receive Thee
Face to face, at the cool tryst of Love?

* * * * *

"If Thou wouldst rouse this habitat of roses,
Leave toying with kettle-drums;
Let there be thunder, storm and tempest,
Yea, an earthquake."

* * * * *

A New Note

An altogether new note of poetry is struck in the poems of Zinda Kaul. Here are some of his verses:

"Man would weep,
He would not gulp down his tears;
But what availed him to shed his tears?
What availed it him to drop blood from his eyes?
What availed it him to beat his head against a rock?
Knowing that none heeds him,
What drives him on still to sue for help?
What drives him on to shoot his darts at the void?
What compulsion! What helplessness!

* * * * *

"Man—momently dying:
By hunger, cold and thirst oppressed,
By disease distressed, by working harrassed,
By fear and want and woe subdued.
These sorrows o'er, by a hundred desires beguiled,
His unsteady mind, not finding rest in anything here,
Still craves for a Something, though unknown,

The Good not seen by him, nor known by him,
He yet would find as something lost, which he possessed before—
Like one who wakes with a memory dim
Of the taste of wine he had in a dream.
What misery—between want and desire !

* * * * *

"Someone (they say) decried from afar
The sheen of His halo, in another time.
This our ears have heard,
This our hearts have believed ;
And we pine for Him
As for our Love, offended and displeased,
Who has fled and hid himself in solitude.
Love-sickness for no reason,
Love-sickness nought availeth.

* * * * *

"Keeping aloof, in concealment far away,
To all entreaties deaf,
Does He ever enquire for us ?
Does He ever think of us, ever ask ?
'Whom have I cast, mid darkness black,
On precipices steep, in forests thick.
What has befallen them ?'
Beauty's wanton indifference.

* * * * *

"Man pleased with his heart :
'He has no love,
Why sue to Him ?
Will a willow tree yield thee a pear ?
Knowest thou the path that leads to Him ?
What means of approach canst thou find ?'
But his mind—would it listen ?
Would it turn back ?
(And who can chain the wind ?)

And how is mind to blame?
Is love an idle fancy?

* * * * *

"Is the sound in his ears the echo of his Self?
The musk-deer chases the musk,
Within him lodged but hidden from his sight,
Running as only a deer can run
Across the hills and wilds.
So recklessly and fast
Runs the heart of man,
Which scents out his Love.

* * * * *

"It will not let him rest,
It still must lead him on
To see beauty blooming here,
And Beauty blooming everywhere,
Inexhaustible and rare!
When the candle shows its flame,
Can a moth lie still, unconcerned?
Rending Reason's garments seven.
Will man not follow up the scent?
(What matters if the musk be hidden from his sight?)
Is Beauty a vain illusive show?

* * * * *

"What bewilderment!
What resistless urge!
What misery between want and desire!
Lovesickness for no reason;
Lovesickness nought availeth;
Beauty's wanton indifference.
Is love an idle fancy?
Is beauty a 'vain illusive show'?"

* * * * *

A Revolutionary Appeal

While Azad and Mahjur, followed by a galaxy of other noteworthy poets like Daya Ram Ganju, Asad Ullah Mir, Lachman Bhat Nagam, Nand Lal Ambardar and Abdul Wahab Hajin belong to the early phase of modern Kashmiri poetry, poets like "Arif" and "Aasi" are the typical symbols of the New Kashmir era. For years Mirja Ghulam Hassan Beg was known to his friends as a student of science who had qualified in Zoology and Botany and worked as Deputy Director of State Sericulture. In 1945 A.D. he surprised his friends when he turned to poetry. Then onwards the name Mirja Ghulam Hassan Beg turned to "Arif" the poet. His poems have a revolutionary appeal :

"I come dashing along
To find my haven of peace,
(While I am young and strong),
(While I am young and strong),
For youth will not endure.

* * * * *

"I gush forth from my source,
My flow doth not abate,
I feel a zest for life,
Life ever doth urge me on.

* * * * *

"I splash along my way,
I strike the rocks, I bleed,
I do not rest, I strive ;
Vigilance knows no rest.

* * * * *

"I am yet young and wild,
I fret and fume and roar ;
It is the silent deep
That bears the priceless pearl.

* * * * *

"In the ocean vast,
One finds one's haven of peace,

This is what Arif says
Those are his precious gems."

* * * * *

A Proletarian Poet

Another well-known poet of the present-day Kashmir is Abdul Sattar Gujri, popularly known as "Aasi" literally meaning the 'Sinner'. Rising from a humble origin—by birth he belonged to the Gujar (milkman) class—Aasi is the leading proletarian poet of New Kashmir. But, for the last several years, he has been earning his livelihood as a load-carrier, a fact which does not worry him in the least. Originally, Aasi started his poetic career composing Persian *Ghazals*, but later his energies were directed towards his people's struggle in which he played a worthy part. He composed several popular poems and songs, enshrining his people's collective aspiration and urge for freedom. And these verses are today on the lips of humble folk all over Kashmir. During the "Quit Kashmir" Movement, Aasi was sentenced to three month's term of imprisonment, when he wrote the famous poem "*Siyasi Qaidi*" or the "political prisoner."

In Kashmir's recent fight for its national defence, Aasi collected innumerable songs and verses and popularised them amidst the village-folk through the "National Cultural Front", a body allied to the Kashmir National Militia. At present, Aasi is the President of the *Bazm-i-Kashmir*, an exclusive society of poets.

In more than one sense, Aasi is the people's poet of New Kashmir. His famous poem *Mazdoor* is the proletarian anthem of the Kashmiri working-class, sung in a revolutionary strain by the humble coolies, stone-carriers, road-builders and boatmen in all parts of the Happy Valley. His themes are almost always focussed round political or economic subjects. During the unprovoked invasion of his dear Motherland, Aasi devoted almost all his time to composing such poems as would inspire the people to mobilise for national defence. The two ringing poems through which he expresses the dynamic struggle of the present revolutionary epoch are *Nida-e-Shuhada* or the "Call of the Martyrs," and *Naujawanon Se Khitab* or "An Address to the Youth." His song *Halwala Jhanda* is dedicated to the National Flag of Kashmir.

But Aasi is not the only poet who has been fighting for Kashmir's freedom. Dina Nath who writes under the pen-name of "Nadim", is another living figure who has produced some beautiful verse with a socialistic message. Other famous writers and litterateurs active on the National Cultural Front, are Prem Nath Pardesi and Somnath Zutshi, who attempt to carry the literary and cultural renaissance to Kashmir's huts and hamlets.

11

LITERATURE OF THE PEOPLE

FOLK tales and folk songs have exercised a tremendous influence on mankind from times immemorial, representing as they do the reaction and response of a people to their environment. Oral traditions thus handed down from generation to generation depict the old customs and manners, myths and beliefs, superstitions and prejudices of the entire people embodying their collective aspirations and urges.

Yet these folk-tales and fables have not remained confined to the countries of their origin, but have been carried from country to country by travellers and scholars and adapted to local surroundings. The early Arabs carried Indian fables of the *Panchatantra* to the highest court of the Muslim Pontiff, and from there the Indian fables travelled to the west in the wake of Islamic conquests. Intermixture of arts and literature thus followed in the wake of conquest. Oriental thought and imagination enriched the scope of occidental fairy-land ; so also did Greek fantasy enrich the world of Indian fables. Chinese legends and myths provided a link between the fairy-world of the Far East and that of the Near East. And, during this long process of transmission and transformation, many an attractive lore came to stay in India and more particularly in Kashmir the roots of which could be linked with those of far-off regions.

Folk Songs and Fairy Tales

Kashmiri literature, thus has an immense wealth of folk songs and fairy tales. These are as antique and historic as the rivers and mountains which have inspired them. Many of these folk tales, like those of "Himal and Nagraya", "Bombur and Lolare", "Zohra Khotan and Haya Band", and "Gulala Shah" are purely Kashmiri in-origin and are the creations of the indigenous mind as influenced by local environment and circumstances. There are, again, a large variety of other tales, like the romances of "Laila and Majnun", "Shirin and Farhad", "Yusuf and Zulaikha", which are simply adaptations or modifications of tales imported from neighbouring countries.

But it is usually the rural people for whom folk tales and folk songs have a particular appeal. *Wazir Mal* and *Lal Mal* are the two famous collections of fairy tales in pure Kashmiri dialect, which the Kashmiri villagers still cherish as their treasured possessions. *Shah Sayar* contains a large number of romantic tales and *Shashman* includes stories of *thugs* and highwaymen.

Love Stories and Ballads

Kashmiri love stories and ballads are popular during winter, when the nights are long and cold, and out-of-door activities are restricted. This is particularly true of the villages. A family and often the neighbours sit round a fire in the long wintry nights, while one of the elders narrates to them tales and fables, interspersed occasionally with short pieces of narrative poetry or song. The song or the tune that accompanies the tale weaves rich patterns of fancy and imagination, carrying the listeners into a dreamland far away. It is remarkable how these Kashmiri villagers still preserve their folk-tales of old in a chaste style. Their faithfulness to the narrative is unique; while the language used is colloquial and effective

Songs and Tunes

But it is not the Kashmiri folk tales alone which are so very compelling in their appeal. Their folk songs and tunes are equally attractive and present large variety in theme and content. The most common theme of these folk-songs is that of love. The bard's fancy sometimes rises to great heights, while, for instance, expressing the pangs of separation of the beloved one from her lover. The lovely maiden metaphorically compares her ear-ring to her lover and sings :

"I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee,
Thou art the God of Love at evening,
And the Sun at early morning,
I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee."

* * * * *

Picking of Saffron Flowers

Special folk-songs are sung on particular occasions, seasons and festivals. There are folk-songs meant for different vocations in life also. The picking of saffron flowers, for example, is always done to the accompaniment of a love song similar to the following, wherein the love-sick maiden feels the pangs of separation from her lover and addresses the flower thus :

"Towards Pampur went away my darling,
Saffron flowers caught him in fragrant embrace.
O, he is there and ah me ! I'm here !
When, where, O God, would I see his face ?"

One often watches Kashmiri women in villages pounding paddy or fetching water or spinning shawl-wool to the accompaniment of their own peculiar folk-songs. The various rites connected with birth, christening and marriage are also accompanied by particular folk songs and tunes usually sung in chorus. The beauty of the bride is aptly sung by the women-folk in the following song :

"Our belle is robed in muslin,
Oh maid ! who has dressed you ?
Your beautiful eyes are crystal-clear,

Oh maid, who has dressed you?
Your teeth are so many pearls,
Who has delved them from the sea?
You are a dealer in gems,
Oh maid! who has dressed you?
Walking, you dispel darkness like a torch,
You twitter like a koel,
Your love has soothed even depressed souls,
Oh maid! who has dressed you?"

* * * * *

The Henna Night

The marriage ceremony is generally preceded by the so-called "Henna Night", when the hands and feet of the bride and bridegroom are dyed in henna. The village girls sing in chorus the following song:

"We congratulate you on your 'henna-night',
You have been blessed with God's mercy.
May you be safe from danger and accidents,
May God remove your difficulties.
You are matchless in your character,
You have been blessed with God's mercy."

The bridegroom's mother also joins in the chorus:

"You pretty damsels, stay here tonight
Oh! do sing in honour of the Raja of India,
His wife's people claim him as their own,
And I shall decorate his bed with mica.
You pretty damsels, he is my darling,
Oh! do sing in the honour of the Raja of India."

* * * * *

A Fundamental Unity

These folk-songs are common to all the people of Kashmir, revealing the fundamental unity that lies in their everyday social and cultural life. They also bring out the basic fact that all Kashmiris have, during their long history, readily responded to their environment and have had common sources of inspiration and recreation.

Since nature has been so bountiful to the Happy Valley, it was but natural that some hoary bard or minstrel should have sung the praises of the variegated beauties that surrounded him.

Joyful Themes

The themes of Kashmiri folk-songs are invariably alike. These themes may be in praise of the majestic *chenar*, the slender cypress, the blossoming plum or the sweet-smelling saffron fields. The slow-flowing Jhelum also forms a common subject of many of these folk-songs. Peasant women and children sing these songs while picking flowers or sowing seeds or spinning in the radiance of the blue sky. Equally enthusiastically do the boatmen, the milkmen, the labourers, the embroiderers, the papier-mache workers sing joyfully as they work. In fact, these songs act as a great stimulant; work would otherwise prove so very dull and monotonous to them. Appreciation of natural beauty has enriched Kashmir's songs, music and legend. Their folk songs are a symbol of their great poetic past, enriched through centuries of accumulated experience.

Popular Ballads

Ballads are particularly popular in the villages. Those most commonly recited are of purely Kashmiri origin, such as the folk tales of "Himal and Nagraya", "Bombur and Lolare", "Zohra Khotan and Haya Band", woven into ballads. In popularity, Persian romantic ballads like those of "*Yusuf and Zulaikha*" come next. The chivalrous element in the Persian *Shah Nama* and *Sikandar Nama* probably touched deep the heart of the ancient Kashmiri folk-lorist and he also immortalized the famous heroic ballad of "*Sohrab and Rustam*". The Arabic story of "*Hatim Tai*" is also a favourite with the village-folk. The recital of these ballads, sung with short pieces of poetry and, song, provides interesting entertainment to these simple rural folk. It is a sight to watch the *Gevan-Vol* or the wandering minstrels, singing these favourite ballads of the ancient land, to the accompaniment of a *Rabab, Dahra,* or *Tumbakarni,* their local musical instruments.

Ballads connected with religious or semi-mystic themes are also popular with Kashmiri people. They have considerably enriched and vitalized Kashmiri literature in general. Epic and Puranic episodes, like *Sudama Charita, Radha Swayamvara, Siva-Lagan,* were selected by the ancient wandering minstrels of Kashmir and passed down through the ages by word of mouth. These ballads are extremely sweet and melodious.

Comic and satiric ballads, bringing out the humour of everyday life, are gradually dying out in the villages. *Lalla Lakhman* is a well-known example of such a poem brimming with fun bordering on the burlesque. Such pieces vividly bring out the wit and worldly wisdom of the simple village-folk. But their appeal is slowly waning in the midst of present-day folk-lore of Kashmir.

Opera Songs

Kashmiri opera songs are also fast losing their appeal. The once-famous Kashmiri opera, *Bagh Nagma,* is no more popular in the villages. This aspect of folk culture deserves to be paid more attention to by the Kashmiris than has been done hitherto.

Pastoral Songs

As to the pastoral songs in Kasmir's folk literature, we have a rich variety of them. These pastoral songs acquire a singular charm when sung in chorus by village belles during the harvesting season or on some seasonal occasion. The picturesque spring, which clothes the trees and plants with fruits and flowers, is often glorified in Kashmir's pastoral lore. Similarly, there are songs sung by young cowherds and shepherdesses when returning with their herds in the gathering dusk of the evening. These are songs expressing the moods and thoughts of the people in their manifold activities.

The Kashmiri Muse thus sings through her folk-lore, fresh and chaste, rhythmic and musical. The tender-footed Kashmiri damsels dancing the *Ruph* (Rohv) or the dance-songs at harvest time or other seasonal festivals in rhythmic movement of alternate chains, represent to us the physical response of the Kashmiris to the joy and beauty of nature around them. In their dances and songs are thus embodied the heritage of Kashmir's dynamic past and the spirit of beauty vibrating through its bountiful nature.

12

MUSIC AND MELODY

THE music of Kashmir has come to be characterized by a peculiarly sweet and melodious quality. Kashmir today has as ancient and continuous a record of musical traditions as the hills and dales that have inspired it.

Music in Kashmir includes classical and folk music, as well as the vocal and instrumental. Between the classical and folk music there is little difference and no clear line of demarcation can be drawn, though the classical music of Kashmir bears a strong resemblance to both Indian and Persian traditions and their finer variations.

Kashmiri classical music is usually called *Soofiana Kalam*. *Soofiana* is derived from "Soofism" which means "mystical", while *Kalam* literally means "poetry", the phrase *Soofiana Kalam* meaning "mystical poetry". There are many characteristic features of the *Soofiana* music. The wording or the text of this music is usually in Persian, occasionally in Kashmiri also. The metre of the verse synchronises well with the *Tala* (rhythm) and the *Bols* (words) which incidentally are themselves different from the Indian *Tala* and *Bols*.

The vocal music is seldom sung in solo. Almost all music in Kashmir is sung in chorus to the accompaniment of instruments, of which *Saz* and *Santoor*, *Sitar* and *Dhukra* or *Dholak* are the most important ones. The music party generally consists of a few vocalists, accompanied by some instrumentalists including a *Dhukra* or a *Dholak* player who keeps the *Tala* or the rhythm.

Indo-Persian Style

This classical music, like the Indian classical, is based on the mixed Indo-Persian style. The basis of its melody is the *maqam*, a counter-part of the Indian *Raga* or melody. The musician is free to invent and compose all variations and finer shades within the frame-work of the *maqam*, just as the Indian vocalist does within that of the *Raga* system. Of the numerous *maqams* in Kashmiri today, about fifty are popular and some of them bear close similarity to the corresponding *Ragas* in Indian classical music. Like the Indian *Ragas*, the *maqams* too have their *Rasas*, and accordingly have to be sung in particular seasons, and also during particular hours of the day and night, for some are morning *maqams*, some evening ones, and some are associated with particular seasons and months. The singer is free within the frame-work of his composition to evolve or elaborate as many *Tans* or variations; and all songs are preceded by a kind of *Alapa* called *Hasrai*. The Dholak is based on the same fundamental principle of *Tala* or rhythm as found in Indian music though the *Bols* or words differ vastly from the Indian system.

Indian Musicians

Whatever variations there be between Indian and the classical Kashmiri music today, the fact remains that Kashmir throughout its history has remained close within the orbit of Indian artistic and cultural influences. Indian classical musicians and singers, like Indian scholars and craftsmen, adorned the courts of many a great king of Kashmir from the most ancient times. In the reign of King Jaluka (200 B.C.), who was known to be a great patron of music, hundreds of musicians and singers collected at his court. A millennium later, we hear of King Lalitaditya who patronized at his court a famous dancer Indra Prabha. This was a golden era in the history of Kashmir when arts and literature flourished, and poetry and music blossomed forth giving new impetus to indigenous talent.

From the eighth to the fifteenth century, there was considerable advance in the art of music in Kashmir. Many authoritative treatises and works on music based on Indian books were written. Every village had a stage of its own, where dramatic performances were held. Every community had its group-dance or community orchestra. And so did every shrine or temple invariably have some singers and musicians attached to it. For, how could the worship of the sacred deity be complete without the singing of some holy *Mantras* or hymns, or chanting devotional songs in chorus to invoke benign favour? With national and religious festivals were associated song and music and no walk of life could be complete without this blithe, joyful entertainment. Kings vied with each other in having at their courts the best of singers and dancers. Harsha and Jaya Simha were themselves able musicians in addition to being patrons of music and dancing.

A Great Incentive

With the inception of the Muslim rule in Kashmir, there was a further impetus introduced in the ancient musical traditions. All Muslim rulers—more so the Mughals—were fond of dancing and music. With these rulers came musicians from far off countries like Persia, Arabia, Samarqand and Central Asia, who did much to transform the character of indigenous traditions. The tendency to create new variations or to mix the old and the new ones is clearly discernible in the compositions of this time. King Zain-ul-Abdin, the most celebrated of the Muslim rulers of Kashmir, was a great classical singer himself and as Abul Fazl writes: "Under his reign, musicians came to Cashmeer from Iran and Turan, amongst whom were from Khorasan, Oudee, the scholar of the well-known Khwajeh Abdul Cader of Khorasan, and Mulla Jammil who was inimitable both in music and painting". Every year, the Sultan held a festival of music to which were invited musicians and singers from Yarkand, Samarqand, Tashkend, Kabul, Punjab and Delhi; and it is said that one of the musicians presented Zain-ul-Abdin a copy of a book on music, the *Sangita Cutamani*. The contemporary Sanskrit scholar Shrivara, a favourite of the Sultan, speaks eloquently about the art of a dancer, Tara, who gave accomplished performance at the court "depicting 49 emotions."

Earlier, two authoritative works on music were written in Sanskrit in the time of Shah Mir (1335 A.D.). These musical treatises called *Samai Matrika* and *Kutni Mahatam*, written by two scholar-ministers of the said Sultan, give elaborate details of Kashmiri music and drama of that time.

After Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin, his grandson, Ali Shah, had nearly 200 musicians collected at his court from Persia, Central Asia and the rest of India.

Another Muslim ruler, Hassan Shah, in the subsequent period, is reputed to have had over a thousand renowned musicians at his court. The story goes that he also invited to Kashmir some musicians from Karnataka, who popularized a number of the *Karnataki Raginis* or melodies in the land.

Mixed Musical Traditions

Akbar's reign marks the dawn of a new stage in the history of classical music—both Indian and Kashmiri. Under him, Kashmir came close within the orbit of Delhi and Agra, the two centres of art and learning of that time. One could well imagine the far-reaching effects of the classical traditions which became partly Persian and partly Indian, under the inspiration of this great ruler who had a genius for synthesis. As in Delhi and Agra, so in Kashmir, the influence of the mixed musical traditions and modes of singing must have been responsible to a considerable extent in enriching and extending the boundaries of the music of the land. Hence the peculiar genius of the music of Kashmir, which even after centuries of chequered traditions, has in its system a large number of Persian and Indian melodies—exactly corresponding to one another.

But, the decline and fall of the Mughal Empire meant the decline and decay of finer traditions in all spheres—artistic and cultural. The last weak successors of the Mughal dynasty hastened the process of decay, and classical musical traditions began to wither away. The pattern of Kashmiri music and arts was less happy, less beautiful, than before, although the rich heritage of the past gave direction and impulse to a revival of popular or folk-music which is still the pride of the land.

Ladakhi Music

That the State of Kashmir, including such vast areas as the province of Jammu on the one hand and the high mountainous regions of Ladakh on the other, should have had different varieties of local or regional music, is quite natural. While the people of the Valley have the pure classical or the *Soofiana Kalam* music, the region of Ladakh beyond the Valley has its individual musical traditions. The Ladakhis are mainly Buddhists ; their monasteries play an important part in their cultural and artistic activities. Among the Ladakhis community-music and community-dances are a prominent item on religious and social occasions. Indeed music, being popular in Ladakhi monasteries and in the colourful dance-pageantry associated with Ladakhi religious life, has acquired the character of a sacred ritual.

And, like Ladakh, there is Pahari music of the plains also, resembling the Pahari music of other parts of India very closely. This music is mainly centred round themes connected with the daily activities of the people, like the cutting of grass or the harvesting of the rice or the crop, and dancing and singing of the joys of the seasons and festivals. The people of Jammu are not very much different from those of the Punjab and it is therefore, not strange that their musical style and pattern should be very much similar to the Punjabi music.

Folk Music

But the most popular and the most widely played music of the people of Kashmir is the *Chakri,* a kind of folk-music and folk-dance combined together. The Chakri sung in chorus, is accompanied by a folk-music orchestra and a dance-item by a little boy dressed in elegant costumes. The *Chakri* sings of the beauty of nature, the attractions of the flower-bedecked valleys, the sweet-scented gardens, the brooks, the rivers, and the birds and the flowers, as also of hopes and disappointments born of love and separation. The *Chakri* is the music of the people, as distinguished from the *Soofiana Kalam*, which is the music of the leisured classes.

Wandering Musicians

Similar to *Chakri*, richer in content and as popular in entertainment, is the music of the *Bhands*, the wandering minstrels of old, who still carry on the ancient traditions of music, dance, drama and the burlesque combined. For centuries, the *Bhands*, as popular singers, have provided the only kind of entertainment available to small villages and peasant-folk of Kashmir. They are the direct descendants of those ancient classical musicians who once adorned the courts of mighty rulers. The *Bhands* today inhabit a small separate colony of their own—nearly 200 in number—in the small village of Vathore, about twelve miles south-east of Srinagar. They wander from place to place, from village to village.

The *Bhands* have been essentially singers of the people, the common folk. As the harvesting season is over and the autumn ushers in, signalling the approach of cold wintry months, and when the peasants and cultivators have a little respite, these popular *Bhands* of Vathore stir about in the Valley, wandering from place to place with their huge paraphernalia of popular singers, folk-instrumentalists, dancers and mimics. The entertainment team consists of two instrument-players, two drummers, a clown or two for mimicry, and a couple of boys dressed in female attire. Inheritors of the rich traditions of dance, music and drama, the *Bhands* continue the traditions of old, in the villages. They depict the ancient legends of their land, the heroic battles and court-intrigues, the incidents and stories which still interest the people, reviving memories of their glorious past.

13

FRAGRANT BLOSSOMS

The Valley of Kashmir has for long been famous for its fragrant and sweet-smelling saffron. Sanskrit scholars from outside the Valley have often referred to the land as *Kasmira* or *Kasmiraja*, which, according to lexicographers, means saffron, famous from earliest of times as one of its chief products. Hence its name "the land of saffron and honey."

Nowhere in the world, much less in the East, is to be found saffron of the same quality and flavour as that of Kashmir. The Kashmir saffron is not only far superior to the saffron grown in Italy or Morocco, but it is also much more abundant in quantity. In the good old days, it was exported to different parts of the eastern and the western world, and won for itself proverbial fame, which came to be enshrined in indigenous songs and stories. According to Taranath, saffron cultivation was first introduced in Kashmir by a monk called Madhyantika.

As the summer months begin to wear out and autumn enters, little purple saffrons begin to blossom forth into their manifold sprouts, bringing in their train new life and colour to the scenery. The Happy Valley at this time seems to wake up from a deep lingering slumber, and the air is filled with the sweet scent of its perfume. Saffron signals the coming of the cold wintry months.

The Saffron Season

Situated about eight miles from the capital city of Srinagar, on the right bank of the Jhelum, is the famous town of Pampur, where the saffron flowers bloom forth in the second half of October. A sweet fragrance, almost enchanting and alluring, is spread all around, attracting the passers-by. But it is really on moonlit nights, when the sky is clear and the moon is full, that the beauty and grandeur of the vast sea of purple blossoms on the fields of Pampur comes out in bold relief. As the silvery disc of moon rises higher and higher on the blue sheet of the clear sky, and the cold dreary winds start blowing, laden with all the perfume of the fragrant blossoms from the neighbourhood, the tender-footed village damsels come out of their homes in little groves, dancing to herald the dawn of the new season. Village belles begin to dance, their flowing rhythmic figures in harmony with the tune. And then, nature, too, sings and dances with them. The pattern becomes complete when the peasant men and women, forgetting themselves, also join in the merriment.

Favourite Songs

It is a delightful sight to watch the picking of saffron flowers at the harvesting time. Be it day-time or the moonlit night, the village folk come out in flocks to pick the blossoms to the tune of their favourite songs. The burden of these songs, like that of all folk-lyrics of the land, is the same pathetic plaint of the beloved deserted by her lover, symbolically lured away by the wild perfume of the fragrant flower. These songs also depict the sensitivity of the Kashmiri mind reacting to the beauty and loveliness all around.

But the pain of separation from the lovely flowers is equally intense when saffron picker hands over his collection to the State contractor, sadly singing :

"How pink is saffron's colour ?
Collecting it into heaps we are bathed in sweat;
Soon, too soon, it will be hurried to the city.

Enjoy its glorious view, O Samad,
How pink is saffron's colour ?"

* * * * *

Rich Natural Scenery

Pampur is rich in natural scenery. The low-lying plateau on the banks of the Jhelum lies furrowed into innumerable beds, each one rising slowly above the other, while sombre ranges loom large in the background, with the snowy peaks hanging above them like a balcony, and below them lie the small groves of village hutments scattered all round the river-bank. Such then is the natural scenery of Pampur with the richness of all the romance and beauty nature could ever bestow on its unsophisticated people!

The process by which the saffron is grown is a long and laborious one. Saffron requires a peculiar climate for its growth. The soil of Pampur is particularly suited for its culture. The plants, which are small in the beginning, have extremely tender stems buried in the soil, the only part visible above the ground being the flowers when they have sprouted. Then begins the short period for the collection of the real saffron leaves from inside every single flower that has blossomed forth. The stamens and the styles are then separated from one another, as it is these three-pronged stamens alone that contain the real saffron. The styles are thrown away. There is no dearth of unscrupulous sellers who would merely dye the saffron styles with the colour of the stamens and pass them on as the real stuff. And the market is often flooded with this spurious saffron. But its detection is simple: one or two of the saffron leaves are rubbed in water. While real saffron continues to maintain its red colour to the very end, the spurious one instantly leaves the artificial covering and exposes the yellow colour.

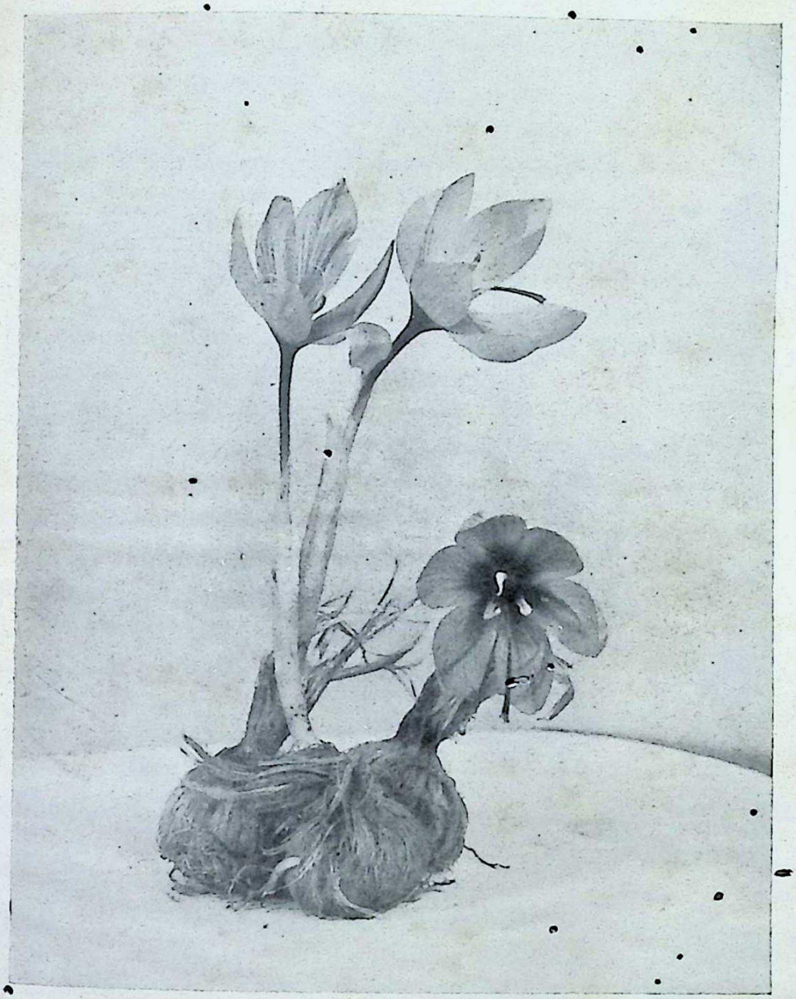
The Colour of Chivalry

The value of saffron as a powerful ingredient is known to Indian medicine from very ancient times. It is used in the preparation of many important medicines to this day.

There is a common belief prevalent in Kashmir that no headache or malady can ever attack people inhabiting the areas near the saffron fields, and it is a well-known fact that no serious disease has ever prevailed in the villages around Pampur.

Saffron is also used as an ingredient in the preparation of dainty dishes at the dining-table. Moreover, on auspicious occasions, it is used in the performance of Hindu rituals and ceremonies.

The colour of the saffron has been considered sacred by the brave Rajputs of India from ancient days. The age-old colour of the Hindu flag has always been saffron, symbolic of valour and chivalry.



A SAFFRON PLANT

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THE VALLEY OF LAKES

ENCLOSED by snow-capped mountains, the Happy Valley of Kashmir is studded with lakes all over, some of them held to be the most beautiful in the world. The Dal, close on the outskirts of Srinagar, with the far-famed Mughal gardens flanking its shores, and the floating little islands of luxuriant lotuses and fields perched on its placid surface, provides an ideal picnic spot. With a *shikara* on the lake on a moonlit night, one is sure to remember the night for ever. In the evenings, when the rays of the sun are shining mellow on its calm waters, the lake, with its gaily-decorated house-boats and canoe-like *gondolas*, looks like a city of water, standing against an amphitheatre of sombre mountains, with the Shankaracharya temple in the distant horizon. Who can forget the charms and delights of this fairy-city ?

It was the ancient chronicler Kalhana who sang: "Kailasa is the best place in the three worlds; the Himalayas—the best part of Kailasa ; and Kashmir, the best part in the Himalayas." It may well be added : "And the Dal is the best part of Kashmir."

The Dal

Situated at the foot of the Shankaracharya Hill, the Dal is the most beautiful sweet-water lake in Kashmir. It measures five miles in length from north to south and two miles from east to west. Towards its city-end, the entry of its waters into the Jhelum is controlled by a lock called the Dal Gate. A net-work of canals and waterways intersect the lake at several points. Lotus fields abound on its surface, particularly near the Nagin and the Naseem. A metalled boulevard runs round it, like an encircling ring of silver, connecting the various beauty-spots with each other. On Sundays and other public holidays, streams of holiday-makers are seen thronging their way to these gardens, either by road or through water-ways, by *shikaras* and *doongas*.

The Dal Gate provides an excellent site for mooring the house-boats and *doongas*, while Gagribal in the Lake offers delightful swimming boards and bathing ghats. The tiny little islands—Sona Lank or the Golden Isle, and Rupa Lank or the Silver Isle—projecting their vegetation and floral growth above the surface of the water, also provide excellent spots for holidaying and merry-making. The four stately *chenars* on the Sona Lank present a picturesque site; they look like the sentinels of the Lake mounting guard over the vast amphitheatre.

The Wular

But, while the Dal forms the heart of Srinagar, the Wular constitutes the largest fresh-water lake in India, and perhaps in the whole of Asia. Its waters are extremely deep and measure nearly fourteen miles in width in summer and seven miles in winter. They sometimes touch even the far-off villages. The Lake is irregular in shape, shallow on its sides, though deep in its centre, while the high mountainous ranges of the Pir Panjal hang all round it. The deepest parts of the Lake lie towards the hill, on the summit of which is situated the famous shrine of the Muslim saint Shakruddin. Pilgrims and devotees from all parts of the Valley visit the shrine to invoke the blessings of the holy saint.

The Wular provides interesting amusement to sportsmen and anglers who fish in its waters. In the breeding season, wild ducks rear the young ones in its weeds and willows and provide an interesting game of duck-shooting. The Lake, which is often ruffled by terrible winds and storms during the afternoons, offers fascinating scenery. An artificial island still raises its head in the centre, a monument to the glory of Kashmir's famous ruler Zain-ul-Abdin, who had built it on the ruins of temples and palaces which originally stood here. There is a story about the origin of this legendary island. It was a place of human habitation in ancient days. Then there came a king, called Sundar Sena, who was cruel and depraved. His subjects, also adopted the same way of life, thereby invoking the wrath of the gods. The island was then turned into a mighty lake and the entire community was submerged and destroyed.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin discovered the remains of a temple below the surface of the Lake and with the help of divers laid the foundations of an island afresh. The king named it Zaina-Lanka. The Sultan was extremely fond of sport, and his favourite pastime was shooting on the shores of the Wular Lake. But all that was once glorious has vanished now and the island contains only a few ruined structures—remnants of the once glorious traditions peculiar to medieval Kashmiri architecture. The Lake has now the flourishing town of Sopore on its banks, from where the river Jhelum takes a different route to wend its way south-wards.

The Anchar

The Anchar, which is a shallow-water lake, is situated only six miles from Srinagar, and is, within the easy reach of tourists and picnickers. The Lake can be reached from the Dal by *shikara* through the Mar Canal, originally constructed by king Zain-ul-Abdin. In spring and summer, when the greater part of the Lake is marshy, the waters are full of green lotus leaves, while the shores are lined with luxuriant chestnut trees. Water-birds and warblers flock to its shores and abound in reeds and willow trees in which they find a favourite place for nestling. A small village, called Vicharnag, lies on the eastern side of the Lake, where Hindu pilgrims collect together annually for a sacred pilgrimage.

The Manasbal

The Manasbal, fresh and deep and clear, is "the loneliest and the loveliest" of Kashmir's lakes. Its beauty is unrivalled, its charms are varied. "Set like a jewel among mountains", it vies with the loveliest of lakes in the world, in beauty and grandeur. Its shores, which, for miles together lie covered with lotus blossoms, have elicited the greatest praise from lovers of nature and beauty. "The lotus", observes Arthur Neve, "is nowhere more abundant or beautiful than on the margins of this lake."

The Manasabal, which is situated at a distance of eighteen miles from Srinagar, has excellent camping grounds in the Sind Valley. A little further up lies the cave of a Muslim saint. An old ruined temple, half merged in the soil, still exists on its shores, while the ruins of a Mughal garden, the Darogha Bagh, built by Emperor Jehangir for his lovely Queen Nurjahan, hearken us back to the days when the Emperor used to visit this lonely spot for an occasional respite from his busy life. The garden with its terraces is nothing but a mass of old ruins—a tragic reminder of the inevitable end of all earthly things.

The Sheshnag

Kashmir has many other lakes situated at various places and altitudes. The Sheshnag is a snow-fed lake at a height of 11,730 feet above sea-level on the way to the famous Amarnath Cave. The Lake, which is set amidst snow-peaked mountains, beautifully mirrors the eternal grandeur of the Himalayan ranges, while its turquoise blue waters look like an emerald set in a jewel-piece.

Most of these Kashmir lakes can be visited during the spring or summer months, when the weather is clearer and the life around gayer. As the months of May and June approach, snows begin to melt, the sunshine grows warmer. The shores of the lakes are bedecked with colourful patches of pink and white lotuses, while birds of multi-hued plumes begin to flock back to the Valley, migrating from distant plains to fill the gardens and lakes with their songs. The slumbering Valley then wakes up to a new life, greeting the world, with its offerings of fruits and flowers.

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THE ABODE OF GOD

Time and again poets and seers have sung of the beauty and scenic charms of Kashmir. Nature here is beautiful, variegated and enchanting, enshrined as we see it in the beautiful valleys and sunlit peaks. The Himalayas and their lofty heights and eternal snows, the glaciers and their encircling cliffs and gorges, and above all the flower-bedecked valleys rich with luxuriant growth of foliage, are all sites which have enchanted many a lover of nature and inspired many a great poet and philosopher.

Saints and seers flocked here, allured by the eternal majesty of the Himalayas. For, have not the Himalayas with their eternal snows and deep-wooded growth, provided the original inspiration to the saints and sages of India? Have not these immense mountain-ranges, standing as they do in all their majesty and splendour, provided the source of all their spiritual and artistic inspiration and thought? In their otherwise inaccessible snow-laden peaks and emerald valleys, these saints and sages of old wandered and picked the chosen sites for worship and deification. It is, therefore, not difficult to imagine that Kashmir should have become a place of pilgrimage for the whole of India.

A Sacred Pilgrimage

Of the various Hindu pilgrimages, the one to the snow cave-temple at Amarnath is perhaps the most sacred and famous all over India. This celebrated shrine, situated in one of the most inaccessible parts of the Himalayas, has been from ancient times the cherished goal of thousands of pilgrims. The difficulties and hazards of the journey have added to the pilgrimage a touch of piety and sanctity and when the holy mission is performed, the pilgrims seem to feel that they have fulfilled their spiritual aspiration.

The two most ancient chronicles of Kashmir—the *Nilamata Purana* and the *Raj Tarangini*—have both described the Amarnath temple and the annual pilgrimage Kashmiri Pandits used to undertake. Generations of holy men and pious laymen have paid their homage at the divine cave. In the 9th century A.D., the Hindu teacher, Shankara, and in recent times Swami Vivekanand, went on pilgrimage to this holy spot. It is believed that a good part of the *Vedas* was composed here and that the Buddhist *tripitakas* were also collected and edited at this very place. Even the Muslim ruler Zain-ul-Abdin is said to have performed a holy pilgrimage to this sacred shrine and won the goodwill of his Hindu subjects.

Legend of the Deities

The cave is dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati. It is believed that it was here at the centre of the universe, in the midst of the snow-clad mountains, Lord Shiva showed Parvati the panorama of his creation of the world. Not a soul, not a living creature was at that time near by, except his two *rudraganas*, faithful attendants of the God, who, aroused by a fatal curiosity, lent their ears to the discourse of the heavenly couple thereby arousing the wrath of the God of Destruction who transformed them into green pigeons: ever since two pigeons are believed to visit the cave temple once a year at the period of the annual pilgrimage. Even in our times, two pigeons fly once each year to this mountain abode. Where they come from, where they feed, where they fly, is a mystery to the pious devotees. It is part of a celestial secret none can know. Some people conjecture, however, that this pair of pigeons live in the fissures on the Mansarowar Lake in the Himalayas and fly to the cave every summer as the first pair of pilgrims. The images, representing the emblems of a phallus and a breast, are the two deities, also giving rise to endless speculation. Such are the legends and myths, from days of the hoary past, grown rich around the sacred pilgrimage of Amarnath.

The celebrated shrine of Amarnath is situated at a height of 12,729 ft. above sea-level in the Himalayas. It lies in a long glacial gorge at the farthest end of the Liddar Valley. The shrine, which is situated amidst steep mountain heights, is most picturesque, surrounded as it is by denuded rocks of yellow-ochre colour. Below flows the Amravati stream. The centre of attraction in the shrine is an impressive cave, about 150 ft. in diameter, which contains a self-formed *lingam* of ice, believed to "wax and wane with the moon". People assemble here for the annual *Darshan*, which falls on the full-moon day at the time of the *Raksha Bandhan* festival. It is on this day that the pilgrims have a glimpse of the sacred *lingam*—in the frozen block of ice representing the Shaivite emblem.

The Annual March

The annual pilgrimage starts in the beginning of August. Pahalgam, which is the famous summer-resort in the Liddar Valley, is the base camp for the pilgrimage from where the pilgrims start on foot on the 11th day of the lunar fortnight. The journey, which is about 32 miles, is completed in three marches, the important camping stages being Chandanwari, Vavjan and Panchtarni. On the morning of the fourth day, the pilgrims reach the final stage and have a *Darshan* (sight) of the holy *lingam* (emblem of God Shiva). The return journey is completed within two days.

There is a shorter route leading to Amarnath *via* Baltal, the distance being only 71 miles from Srinagar. Upto Baltal (59 miles) there is a well-built road. Thereafter, a further twelve miles' journey has to be covered, three miles on a small road from Sangam to Amarnath and a nine mile trek over glaciers. But when the ice bridge melts in summer, the journey is rendered impassable.

The hardships of the journey—the steep and narrow ascent, the cold and biting winds, the sudden snowstorms and land-slides and the continuous mass of glaciers—make it necessary for the people to undertake the journey in a caravan. The pilgrims assemble together in a huge mass, men and women, young and old, all trek their way slowly on foot to the steep ascent, while the young children and the infirm ones hire ponies and horses to be carried up to the last stage of the holy journey. All the amenities and facilities to make the pilgrims' journey comfortable are provided by the State. Temporary sheds and shops, camps and hutments spring up at short distances for the convenience of travellers during the season. The poor are provided free food and clothing from the State Dharmarth Fund and government officials are posted on duty throughout the journey to look after the pilgrims.

A Caravan in Procession

Thus equipped and fully prepared, all assemble in a procession in quest of a common purpose. The march starts on a given date, in August, from Pahalgam. From Pahalgam (7,200 ft.) to Chandanwari (9,500 ft.) it is only 9 miles; here the caravan comes to halt for the first stage of the journey is complete. Chandanwari abounds in natural scenery. A vast grassy meadow, surrounded by tall fir trees, provides a good camping site near the springs. Here a natural bridge of snow spans a rivulet for the greater part of the winter but at the time of the pilgrimage it almost melts away.

Sapphire-Blue Waters

A further journey of seven miles and an ascent of another thousand feet brings the pilgrims to a beautiful expanse of sapphire-blue waters of the Sheshnag Lake, situated at an altitude of 11,730 ft. The sight of this exquisite mountain lake, surrounded by hills on all its sides, is compensation enough to a traveller worn out by weather and fatigued by an arduous journey through rugged and precipitous ascent. The more conscientious of the Hindus take a bath in the Sheshnag Lake and perform religious rites. A mile further from Sheshnag comes Vavjan or Vayujan, which is the second stage of the journey. Vayujan derives its name from the fact that cold winds blow violently here and sometimes they even uproot tents and upset camping arrangements.

A Steep Pass

On the third day, the caravan marches to Panchtarni, (about 12,003 ft.) which is situated nearly 8 miles or so from Vayujan. The path lies through a steep pass which ascends up to 14,000 ft. high, covered by large patches of half-melted snow; then begins a sudden descent. The scenery all around is wild and austere. Lofty snow-covered peaks encircle Panchtarni like a girdle around the impenetrable citadel, while five streams fed by melted snows meet here and form the Ramganga, and ultimately merge into the river Sind. Thus in the cool shadows of the grim and majestic Mount Amarnath at Panchtarni, the pilgrim reaches the last halt of his journey.

A Path of Ice

From Panchtarni, the Amarnath cave is only five miles away. On the morning of the fourth day, the pilgrims trek their way to the cave on a path of ice which seldom melts and underneath which torrential streams flow. Both sides of the narrow path are flanked by stern and awe-inspiring mountain ranges of Kailash and Bhairava. This is the journey's end.

In the midst of religious chants and holy verses, the pilgrims bow before the self-formed emblem of ice and offer their prayers. In this temple of God, untouched by man's hands, they make their offerings before the holy symbol formed inside the cave. The ceremony takes less than half an hour. The pilgrim's desire is fulfilled. The hardships and sufferings, which they have undergone during the long and arduous journey, are amply compensated in this one great moment of celestial bliss.

Such is Amarnath, the imperishable home of Lord Shiva on that glorious eminence, as upon a splendid couch, where he reclined, accompanied by the daughter of the Sovereign of the Mountains, and attended by the mighty *Adityas*, the powerful *Vasus*, and the heavenly fairies. Along with the two other sacred places, Badrinath and Kedarnath, Amarnath continues to be one of the three most sacred pilgrimages in India for the Hindus, inspiring millions and milions of devotees who seek in its pristine purity a solace for their anguished souls.

16

DIVINE HEIGHTS AND HOLY STREAMS

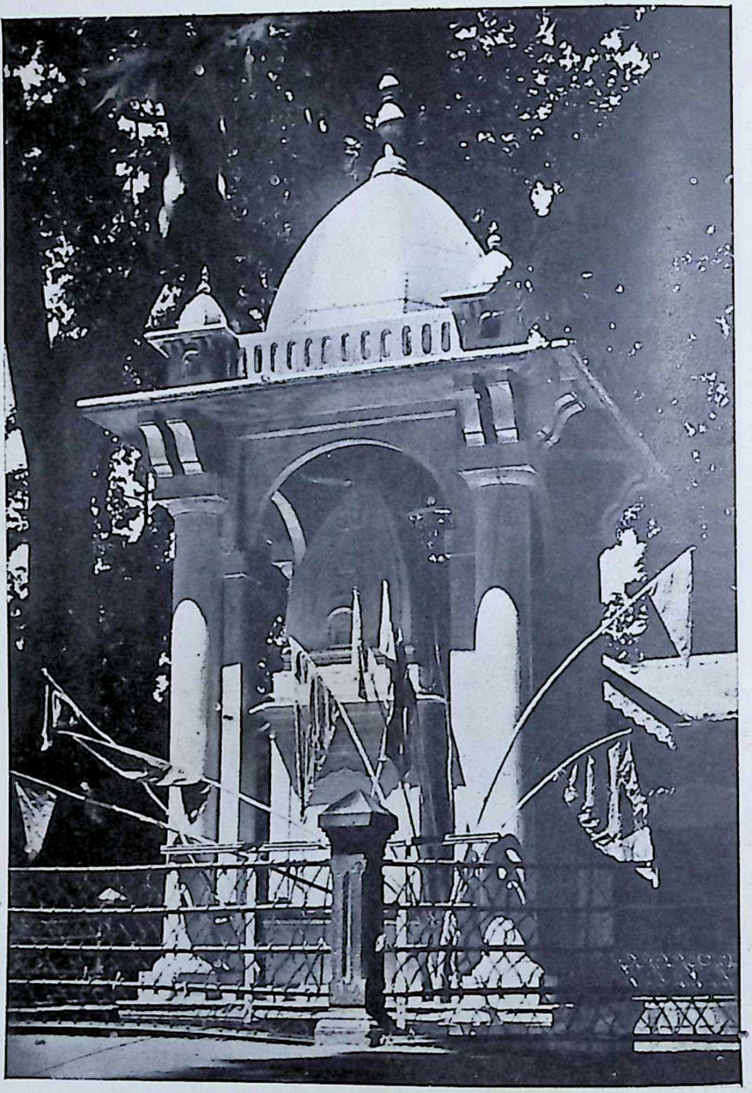
FOR centuries past, Kashmir has been considered to be the holiest of the holy lands. For, according to ancient traditions, almost every hill and mountain, every lake and river in Kashmir, has a divine origin. The Kashmir hills and mountains, lakes and rivers, according to legends and *Mahatmyas*, are the sacred abodes of Nagas and heavenly figures, thereby serving as media for the fulfilment of the pious mission, i.e., the washing away of the sins of the faithful.

The Vitasta, the present-day Jhelum, is believed to contain within its waters all that is holy in the world, like the sacred Ganges brought down from the heaven and lost in the wilderness of Shiva's matted locks, and then falling again in a fountain from his head to the earth below. Indeed, the land came to be known as the *Rishi-Bhumi* or "the land of the sages", *Sharadapitha* or the "eternally pure seat of the goddess Sharada".

Kashmir thus possesses innumerable holy shrines and divine heights and streams, attracting pilgrims from all parts of India and from all sections of the people. But while Amarnath, the holiest of the Trinity, forms the most important pilgrimage in Kashmir, there are several other sacred shrines and hollow caves associated with the name of some sacred god or the other, still the source of attraction and inspiration to millions in the land.

Martand

The temple of Martand, situated at a distance of 39 miles to the south of Srinagar on the Pahalgam road, stands as a most outstanding pilgrimage of the Hindus.



THE KHIRBHAWANI TEMPLE

It is dedicated to the Sun-god. At the foot of the cliff, a spring considered holy is enclosed in two tanks—the upper and the lower—surrounded by a temple towards the east and by some pilgrims' houses nearby. Pious devotees come here annually, particularly during months of the Hindu leap year, when they perform the *Shradha* ceremony of their dear and near ones who are no more.

In the centre of the lower tank has recently been constructed a temple of carved stones, while outside the tanks lies a huge and spacious garden, studded with shady *chenars*, providing shelter and shade to the devotees, who flock to this place for holy benediction.

Khirbhawani

The temple of Tulamula, dedicated to the goddess Khirbhawani, or Ragnia Devi, who is believed to have been brought here from Ravana's Lanka in Ceylon by Hanuman, lies surrounded in picturesque scenery, at a distance of 14 miles to the north of Srinagar. The temple has a spring, the waters of which exhibit a strange phenomenon of a change of colour—varying widely between the violet and the bright red—according to the season and time of the year. The *Ragani Kavach* or the holy psalm in praise of the goddess was included in the Sanskrit work called *Rudryamala Tantra*, thereby proving the ancient origin of the shrine. The *Raj Tarangini* also mentions an interesting story associated with this shrine. According to Kalhana, King Jayapida (753-784 A.D.) confiscated amongst others the *Jagir* of Ittila, the priest of Tulamula, thus invoking upon himself the angry curses of the said priest. And after a short while, a golden pole of the king's canopy came down upon him, wounding him badly, ultimately resulting in his death. Such is believed to have been the power of the holy men inhabiting this sacred abode of the goddess, whose wrath or curses would not spare even the highest and the mightiest of mortals.

This place of pilgrimage, it is said, fell into disuse during the Muslim rule, till a man named Krishna Pandit Taplu re-discovered it in the seventeenth century and revived the sanctity and greatness of this holy shrine! The Hindu pilgrimage was thereafter resumed.

The worshippers make their offerings to the divine deity in the form of milk, rice and sugar, throwing these into the spring. This resulted in a very thick deposit in its bed and the formation of a heavy sediment on the surface of the spring. The spring, when last cleansed, revealed the ruins of an ancient temple in the centre built of large slabs of sculptured stones, and several others bearing the images of Hindu deities. The whole structure was repaired by Maharaja Pratap Singh (1885-1925 A.D.), who built on the spot a small temple of white marble. This has greatly enhanced the attraction and beauty of the temple. An annual fair is held here at the shrine of Khirbhawani in the month of *Jeth* (May-June), while each eighth day of the fortnight is reserved for prayers and other religious festivities.

Kapalmochan

Kapalmochan is another place of Hindu pilgrimage, situated about 24 miles from Srinagar, near the once-famous town of Shopyan. There are three springs here situated close to one another, the main spring having an old stone *lingam* and several other Hindu images discovered from under the ground. Legends and myths surround the origin of the place in fanciful stories and hearsay. The *Mahatmya* mentions how once Brahma and Vishnu had a dispute as to who was superior to the other. They both went to Lord Shiva, to beseech his final judgment on this disputed point, whereupon the mighty Lord created a holy *lingam* of dazzling bright light and addressed the two thus: "Vishnu, you go beneath; and Brahma, you go above this holy *lingam* and find out where it ends." And the race started: Vishnu going below and Brahma above the holy emblem till none could find the terminating point. They came back to Shiva. Vishnu admitted his failure, but the five-headed Brahma falsely replied that he had seen the end of the holy light through his fifth head. Enraged thus by this false reply, Shiva cut off Brahma's fifth head and quietly dismissed both by saying that neither was the greater of the two. But the sin of having severed the fifth head of Brahma stuck to Shiva. Lord Shiva then wandered in vain from pilgrimage to pilgrimage, making austere penance, for the atonement of his impious deed. But the stain of sin would not leave him, until Shiva reached Kapalmochan, where alone he could succeed in washing away his sin. Hence the name of this pilgrimage as Degrami Kapalmochan, the former indicating the name of the village where Shiva went and the latter the place where the sin of cutting off the head left him. Since then has Kapalmochan been a sacred pilgrimage for the Hindus, in the hope and belief that the performance of the *Shradha* ceremony of their deceased children here might absolve them from all their earthly sins, in the same way as Lord Shiva got his salvation here. An annual fair is held here on the twelfth day of the month of *Sravan* (July-August), and parents who have lost their children during the previous twelve months, perform their *Shradha* ceremony, and give clothes, ornaments and alms in charity. The belief also prevails that if any person has killed a living creature, he too can be absolved from his sin by offering an image in silver or gold in homage.

Khrew

The shrine of Jwala Devi, the Goddess of Fire, situated in the small village of Khrew, about fourteen miles from Srinagar, is another favourite place of the Hindus. The shrine lies perched on the crest of a small hillock approachable by a flight of stone steps, thereby giving the impression of a little *chateau* peeping through the high top of the azure blue sky. A fair is held here on the 14th day of *Asarh* (June-July) every year, when pilgrims make offerings to the deity and have a dip in the sacred waters of the spring at the foot of the hill.

Shankaracharya

But the highest of the divine heights, after Amarnath, is the well-known Hindu temple of Shankaracharya, crowning the Shankaracharya hill, formerly known as the Gopa or Gopadari hill, opposite the Dal Lake, standing 1,000 feet above the plain. The temple and the hill, which derive their name from Shankara, the great monist Shaivite teacher, were originally built by King Gopaditya (368-308 B.C.), dedicated to the worship of Jyeshthesvara. Later a Shaivite temple enshrining a *Shaivite lingam*, sprang up on the same spot. The temple with its massive octangular structure in stone and enclosed walls, when flood-lit at night, stands as a solitary figure over-looking the city of Srinagar, with the city's long narrow groves of white poplars leading to its main gates. Shankaracharya is the highest point visible from afar to a visitor approaching the capital city. The mountain-temple stands permanent and steadfast, like a sentinel guarding the peoples of the Valley for centuries. At Shankaracharya, too, a fair is held annually.

Sharda

The temple of Sharda, dedicated to the goddess Durga, was considered to be the most pious pilgrimage in the ancient days, though of late it has lost much of its former popularity. The temple, situated at a distance of 74 miles from Srinagar *via* Handwara, occupies one of the most picturesque spots in the side-valleys of Kashmir, and typifies a style of ancient religious architecture—Hindu or Buddhist. Both Hindus and Buddhists loved to build their sanctuaries amidst a wild grandeur of hillocks or higher up amongst the snows and glaciers.

Verinag

It was not only on hills and mountains that Hindu shrines were built; the rivers and springs in Kashmir too have been as holy and sacred for the purpose as the picturesque hill-tops. Kashmir abounds in innumerable springs and streams, believed to be the supposed residences of protecting deities. The beautiful crystal-clear Verinag spring, situated at the foot of the Banihal Pass in the vicinity of a village of the same name, has a special sanctity for the Hindus, as it is the source of the Vitasta, the Jhelum of today. This spring has added sanctity for the people of the Valley, as the sacred *Nilamata Purana*, the most ancient book of Kashmir, is believed to have emanated from here.

According to legends, which have gone a long way to enrich the life and literature of the common people, the goddess Vitasta wanted to take her rise from this place but when she arrived on the scene, she found Lord Shiva already staying there. And so she had to go back and take her rise from a spring called Vithavutra, situated about a mile to the north-west of this place. A fair is held here annually on the 12th day of the month of *Assuj* (September-October) to celebrate the birth of the Vitasta or the river Jhelum. And as the word *Virah* in Sanskrit means "go back", and *nag* signifies "spring", it came to be called Virhanag or Verinag as the Vitasta had to go back from this place.

Anantnag

Situated at a distance of 34 miles to the south of

Srinagar, Anantnag derives its name from a holy spring situated here and dedicated to the worship of Ananta or Vishnu. The spring which rises beautifully from a small hillock is enclosed by a tank. Lower down rises another tank, dotted with a temple at its centre, built recently. Long and shady *chenars* stand guard around the tank enclosures, offering shelter and shade to many a weary pilgrim. An annual fair is held on *Ananta Chaudas*, the fourteenth day of the month of *Bhadrapad* (August-September).

Gangabal

Surrounded by lofty mountain chains, and a picturesque scenery is the lake Gangabal, one of the most beautiful spots in the Sind Valley on the Sonamarg road, about 34 miles from Srinagar. The way to this shrine, which lies near the sacred waters, passes through a narrow steep mountainous pass. According to ancient traditions, which have grown rich around the pilgrimage, the sacred river Ganga took her rise from this place. Hence the sanctity attached to it and the special significance in the performance of the *Shradha* ceremony here. Pilgrims carry the ashes of their dead ones to throw them into this lake. The holy pilgrimage takes place on the 8th day in the month of *Assuj* (September-October).

Kashmir thus includes in miniature, the sacred shrines and caves, mountains and lakes, rivers and springs of the whole Hindu world.

THE LEGENDARY KASHMIRI SHAWL

17

THE LEGENDARY GIFT

LEGENDS and stories have grown round the Kashmir shawl for centuries past and many a romantic tale is told of the princes and princesses who waxed eloquent over it. Who can resist the fine delicacy and the gossamery texture of this legendary gift, proverbial in the east for its beauty and designs?

The ancient Romans, it is said, were well acquainted with the Kashmir shawl and treasured it as a precious gift or souvenir from the east. Persian princes and princesses as well longed for it eagerly and made use of it as a worthy present to be bestowed upon a person to be favoured. Under the Mughals in India, the Kashmir shawl came to be presented to distinguished nobles and personages as a mark of distinction and honour; the higher the rank and position of the personage to be favoured, the greater was the price and beauty of the shawl. A century or two later, Napolean Bonaparte made a gift of this legendary oriental curiosity to his beloved Josephine, as a souvenir of the Nile expedition. It is reported that Josephine was taken by surprise at the exquisite workmanship and daintiness displayed on such fine material.

The British were so enamoured of the Kashmir shawl that in the Treaty of Amritsar of 1846, between the British East India Company and Maharaja Gulab Singh, it was provided that along with other things three pairs of Kashmiri shawls would also be sent by the Kashmir Durbar every year to the British Government.

Origin and Growth

It is not known how and when the shawl-making industry actually started in Kashmir. The art must have been common in the land from very ancient times. In the days of the benevolent King Zain-ul-Abdin, it is said, the shawl-making industry in Kashmir received great patronage and stimulus. The Sultan, who was a lover of all arts and crafts, invited artists and weavers from Persia and Turkestan, and extended to them imperial patronage to settle down in the land. A few families thus grew up, the members of which learnt the technique and niceties of the art from foreign craftsmen, and then passed on the trade from father to son. The shawl-worker or the *shal-baf*, by which name he was popularly known, thus used to spend months and years on the out-turn of a single first-rate specimen. The original inspiration of the art—Persian flowers and medallions,—however, still persists in the Kashmir shawl in its various weaving designs and patterns.

Imperial Workshops

Under the Mughal Emperor, Akbar, the shawl-making industry of Kashmir received a great fillip. The Emperor, so relates the historian Abul Fazl, called the Kashmiri shawl-makers and embroiderers to his court and employed them in imperial workshops. The Emperor also evinced keen interest and had the quality and texture of the fabric improved. This, no doubt, enhanced the price of the shawl and made it a precious, though rare, prize for the common folk to treasure.

The wool fibre used in the Kashmir shawl is remarkably fine and light in weight. This wool, which is called Pashmina wool, is obtained from an extremely soft undergrowth hair on the skin of the Tibetan goats, called ibex, fed on the high pasture-lands of the Tibetan plateau, whence the supplies are transported to Kashmir by land-routes. The Pashmina wool is undoubtedly unsurpassed in its warmth, durability and softness.

Hence the shawls woven out of it are equally known for their velvety softness and dainty texture. Some of the Kashmir shawls are so fine and so light that they can easily be made to pass through a signet ring. Hence the name "Ring Shawl".

Endless Designs

The Kashmir shawl displays an endless variety of designs and patterns. The price of the shawl also varies according to the fineness and quality of the embroidery, which in turn depends upon the length and density of the stitch used in it. Motifs, both from the floral and the vegetable world, are freely borrowed by the Kashmiri embroiderer to be interwoven into Persian geometrical designs. The slow-flowing river Jhelum—the life-line of the Valley—meandering its way through hills and dales has naturally inspired the Kashmiris from the remotest of times. This design of the zig-zag waves has frequently found place in the background details or the borders of the Kashmiri shawl. Other favourite motifs of Kashmiri embroiderers are naturally lotuses and *chenar* leaves woven into interlacing patterns. But some of the antique specimens of the Moghul shawls provide elaborate designs of mango-medallions beautifully worked into dense stitch. Silk and Pashmina threads are used to bring out the more delicate shadings in the designs. The most renowned of the Kashmir shawls are produced by three methods—by embroidering upon a plain foundation cloth, by weaving the pattern along with the foundation cloth, and, lastly, by weaving a pattern as an integral part of the foundation cloth, subsequently embellishing it with embroidery. The present-day craftsmen have invented in addition the use of gold or silver thread-work in place of silken or wollen embroidery.

The old Mughal shawls of Kashmir, in spite of the lapse of centuries, are still remarkable for their soft and permanent colouring. Derived from natural colours or mineral dyes, these old pigments can better withstand the effects of time and weather than the new type of cheap and aniline dyes imported from foreign countries.

The centre of the Kashmir shawl-making industry is Srinagar. At this capital dozens of shawl-looms flourish on a vast commercial scale. Before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Kashmir shawls and fabrics found an extensive market in France. The demand there was so great and urgent that a special Commercial Agent had to be appointed from Paris, who resided in Srinagar and supervised the purchase and export of Kashmir shawls to France. With the conclusion of the Franco-German War, the export trade of Kashmir shawls with France was considerably affected and reduced to a great extent.

Home and Foreign Markets

The outbreak of the Great War (1914-1918 A.D.) almost crippled the export trade of Kashmir shawls to foreign countries. The lack of markets abroad dealt a severe blow to hereditary craftsmen and artisans who had been specializing in the art for centuries. Many of them had to abandon their ancestoral trade and were reduced to the position of ordinary commercial labourers. But the great nationalist movement in India, started in 1920, indirectly helped the revival and re-organization of indigenous arts and crafts and cottage industries which till then, had been lying neglected all over the country, including Kashmir. Under the patronage of the All-India Spinners' Association, which established its branch in Srinagar in 1928, many of the dying arts and crafts of Kashmir were revived. The Spinners' Association gave special attention to those Kashmiri handicrafts and textiles which are produced by hand-spinning and hand-weaving. As a result of this policy, the Kashmir shawl and textile industry received a great impetus and found new markets in the bigger towns of India.

Today, this legendary gift from the land of sacred hills and dales has become a household commodity in almost every town and village in India. The material which once used to be a precious rarity, to be treasured and used only at royal courts and in palatial buildings, has now become a thing of joy and beauty to be cherished in the smallest hamlet and the tiniest hut in the country.

18

MINIATURE PAINTINGS

FOR long, Kashmir, like the rest of India, has maintained traditions of pictorial art and drawing. But while references—literary or traditional—to the existence of the art of painting in ancient days have been found in abundance, few authentic specimens are available for observation.

It was not until 1931 A.D., that Sir Auriel Stein brought to light for the first time one of the most important works of Bhaishajya Guru Sutaram, along with other philosophical works bearing links with the Mahayana System of Buddhism. These Buddhist works, discovered accidentally in the northern hills of Kashmir by a shepherd-boy, form the first and earliest specimens of their kind. Being some of the oldest, dating as far back the as 5th century A.D., they throw much light on the then prevalent religious system. But they are also significant because they are bound in painted covers, with colour drawings and figures beautifully executed on them. The text at one of the places reads: *Sucina Citra Karenah*, or "by a clean artist." It thus shows that the art of painting, which lapsed later on, did flourish in ancient Kashmir.

Further references to pictorial art in the works of Kalidas and Harsha Vardhana exist in many and varied forms. According to the *Raj Tarangini*, painted halls, decorated from within, existed in the Valley as in other parts of ancient India. The *Nilamata Purana*, a much earlier work, supposed to have emanated from the holy lake which was later dried up into the Valley of Kashmir, mentions: *Kvachit Chitrankah Karyai Chaityai Deva-*

grahastatha or "the temples and the Chaityas must be adorned with pictures."

A Style All Its Own

Due to a wide gap in the medieval times, these ancient traditions of Kashmir's pictorial art could not come down to us in their original form. The fact, however, remains that Kashmir evolved a style of its own, peculiarly indigenous, and which due to lack of patronage later faded away. Sir Vincent Smith defines the Kashmir School as "a middle style", possibly meaning a variation of the Rajput School. According to some scholars, these Rajput influences might have left their impress on Kashmir School during the reign of Lalitaditya, the boundaries of whose territories touched Northern India also.

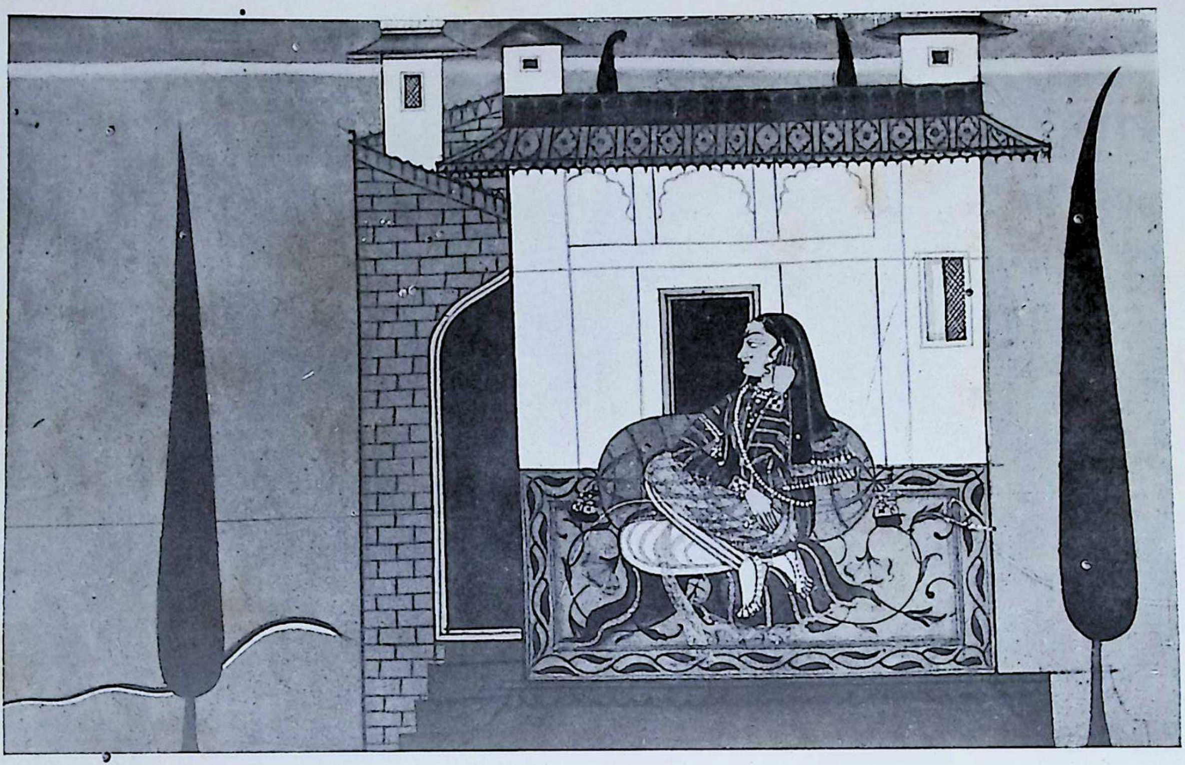
Shelter for Painters

But while the Kashmir Valley remained the focal point of arts and artistic traditions in the early centuries of the first millennium, the district of Jammu, with the capital-town bearing the same name, started attracting painters and artists from the 12th century onward, or even earlier. In this hilly region lying near the fertile plains of the Punjab, yet within the inaccessible recesses of the Himalayas, petty Rajput princes and chiefs, pursued by a host of Muslim conquerors, came to seek shelter and refuge. For more than once, at the fall of Delhi, Ajmer, Bundelkhand and other important seats of Hindu power, the Hindu Rajas retired into the safe wildernesses of this sub-mountainous region and established themselves into petty principalities and kingdoms along the vast belt of territory extending from Jammu right upto Kangra and Garhwal.

Later during the reign of Aurangzeb and his weak successors, when court-painters and artists were deserted by their Mughul patrons, they sought asylum and patronage in these miniature courts of the Hindu Rajas. In different kingdoms and principalities, local schools of painting and artistic traditions grew up, each distinguished by regional peculiarities and individualistic tendencies. It was, perhaps, in the same migratory wave that two of the most famous painters of the Mughal court—Shyam Das and his son Hardas—travelled in the entourage of prince Suleman Shikoh, the son of Dara, who was being pursued by his uncle Aurangzeb. Prince Suleman Shikoh found safe asylum at the court of Raja Prithvi Shah of Tehri-Garhwal in 1658, and under the patronage of Raja Pritvi Shah, the two artists, father and son, revived and perfected the local art of miniature painting. Hardas had his grandson Mola Ram (1760-1883) who continued the traditions of his ancestors, and he was granted a *jagir* or estate of 60 villages with a daily allowance of Rs. 5 by the then ruling prince of Tehri-Garhwal.

And just as in Tehri-Garhwal, so in the district of Jammu, artists and painters flocked and collected. Even earlier, from the beginning of the 17th century, Jammu had started attracting painters and artists from afar. The Jammu School of painting is, therefore, an earlier offshoot of the Rajasthan School of painting, its high water-mark being the 17th and 18th centuries. After this period Kot-Kangra, with its neighbouring kingdom of Tehri-Garhwal, became the more important centre of arts and painting.

Artists and painters flocked to other kingdoms as well—at local centres like Basohli, Chamba, Poonch, Kangra, Nurpur and Mandi—extending widely from Jammu to Tehri-Garhwal and Pathankot to Kulu, roughly measuring an area of 150 miles in length and 100 miles in breadth. All this area, now called the Kangra or the Pahari, was known in the ancient days as *Trigarta*, or the "Three Valleys", comprising valleys of the rivers Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej. On the right bank of the



WAITING FOR HER LOVER

A Basohli painting of the 17th century

Ravi stood Chamba and Basohli. Kangra stood between the Ravi and the Beas, including the famous towns of Nurpur, Haripur, Kangra and Baijnath, each having a small local court and a local centre of art production. In the third strip of area between the Beas and the Sutlej stood a number of other small states like Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur and Bushahr. South of Bushahr stood the kingdom of Tehri-Garhwal, where in the middle of the 19th century, the last flicker of the Pahari painting was still discernible.

Local Schools of Art

It was thus in the inaccessible retreats of these Himalayan States that the last of the Mughal artists and painters, were nurtured into the indigenous traditions of Rajput culture, flourished and became instrumental in developing varied shades of local schools of art and painting.

These ancient traditions of pictorial art have undoubtedly gone a long way to enrich the local life and culture of the Jammu region. And even today, these miniature paintings, are known for their vigour and decorative quality, quite distinct from the elegant and the graceful style of the Kangra paintings. There can be little doubt, however, that the local school of Jammu, though independent, was based essentially on the Rajasthani traditions. Hence it was that Dr. Coomaraswamy defined and described the school with the stamp of and within the scope of the comprehensive term "Rajput". But local peculiarities and indigenous variations clearly distinguish the style from other regional groups of Kangra, Tehri-Garhwal or Chamba and Poonch, to which the miniatures of the Jammu School bear close resemblance.

Simplicity of Conception

The chief peculiarity of the paintings of the Jammu

School is the simplicity of conception and their bold line-drawings. These miniatures in their decorative compositions, with fewer figures and details, suggest a simplicity quite characteristic of the primitive art. And, they present, like all Rajasthani paintings, a magnified impression of the decorative schemes of the mural paintings. The technique came particularly handy to the Jammu artist for the representation of large and dramatic themes from the Hindu epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The same quality, though in a lesser degree, may be seen impressed on all the local offshoots of the main Rajasthani art, i.e., on Kangra, Tehri-Garhwal and other local schools.

Among the other conspicuous qualities and peculiarities of the Jammu miniatures may be mentioned the very high horizon which the artist loved to paint on the top of his pictures. There is always a thin narrow line of the blue sky left between the main picture and its border. This horizon is again occupied by bunches of small dense clouds floating in white little twirls, while in the scenes depicting the pitch darkness of the night, the sky is adorned with wavy patterns of crimson-coloured lightning flashes, as well as misty white drops of falling rain. In more elaborate pictures, the artist loves to depict these little details in dazzling gold or silver pigments.

Predominance of Basic Colours

The colouring of the Jammu miniatures is warm and bright, with a predominance of basic colours like reds, yellows and greens. The artist always tends to render their effect more brilliant by the use of enamel-like decorations with little fragments of beetles' wings, intended to enhance the beauty of the jewellery, beads or costumes, a feature which distinctly separates the Jammu or Basohli miniatures from the other local variations of the Pahari style. These beetles' wings are cut out and pasted in little dots on to the miniatures, giving them a character almost jewel-like, in the same way as the Nepali artist loves to paint and adorn the religious pictures of Tara and other sacred deities with decorations of precious stones or pearls.

The composition scheme is always simple with fewer figures. Technically, these Jammu miniatures may be classified as crude or primitive, but their simplicity has great qualities of force and vigour. The architectural background, massive and bold, is depicted in bold outlines. The trees and foliage are represented in conventionalized forms, the more familiar ones amongst them being the "weeping-willow" and the traditional *Kadamba* tree in heavy and dark-green foliage. The drapery and costumes of the figures, though transparent, lack the rhythmic and lyrical quality of the flowing costumes of the Kangra paintings, where the feminine figure, tall and slender like a cypress, matches well with the lines and curves of her flowing scarf or skirt-line. In many of these Jammu miniatures, the light drapery of the male figure is relieved by the black of the rosary-beads or the precious jewellery worn by him. The head-dress of this male figure is of a peculiar local variety, and can be distinguished from other schools by a long flower-stem or peacock-feather stuck in the turban, a custom still prevalent in the hilly regions of Northern India.

Feminine Figures

But while the feminine physical type depicted in the Kangra-Garhwal paintings is marked by an elegant and willowy form, long tapering henna-dyed fingers, and dreamy half-closed eye-lids, the ideal of feminine beauty represented in Jammu miniatures is much fuller and maturer. The full front face with round cheek-bones and receding forehead, the tightly-dressed hair-style, and the large fully-blossomed almond-shaped eyes, are features which clearly mark out the Jammu paintings. There is little of the delicacy, and even less of the sweetness and lyrical quality of the Kangra type in these human forms. Obviously, the Jammu miniatures had their ancestry in Rajasthani paintings.

In portraiture, which was undoubtedly the forte of the Jammu School, the artist was still more prone to evince these tendencies in an exaggerated way. The figure drawing being bold and exaggerated, the eyes are large and bulging, with the pupil in the centre, even when the face is shown in profile. The kings and nobles, holding a flower or a jewel in their hand, are almost always shown in stiff and conventional poses.

Many of the Jammu miniatures have decorations with a red border-line—a legend or a religious text inscribed in white at the top. Not infrequently does a part of the picture project even beyond the border. The reverse of the miniature is, however, reserved for some selected piece or text from a religious book or a literary work from the pen of some well-known writer or poet. In still other cases, there are Sanskrit extracts written in *Dev Nagari* script. The more popular forms are short inscriptions in the local dialect, written in the Dogra Takri character, as distinguished from the Hindi extracts in Nagari inscribed on the Pahari miniatures. Occasionally, the artist also chooses to indicate the names of his heroes and saints with his own brush at the bottom.

A Variety of Subjects

The scope of subjects, includes a vast variety ranging from the epic to the ordinary portraits of princes and nobles. The most popular themes with the Jammu artist are the stirring scenes and episodes from the epics and the *Puranas*. These themes, at once dramatic and epic, no doubt suited the artist's style. Such are the scenes representing the goddess Durga slaying an *Asura*, or Lord Shiva in the form of Rudra destroying all vegetation and human life on the heights of the Kailash. These examples appear even more dramatic than the best of their counter-parts in the Pahari or Kangra *qalam*. Illustrations from seasons, and *Ragmala*, or erotic descriptions from the *Gita Govind* or other literary works of poets like Kesava, Bihari, Deva and Matiram, also find occasional favour with the artist. But it is mostly the Puranic and epic episodes like the story of Nala and Damayanti, Savitri and Satyavan, or stirring incidents from Lord Krishna's life, that catch the artist's fancy. Folk ballads and folk romances like Hir and Ranjha, and Sohni and Mahiwal are specially large in number in the Jammu miniature collections, though portraits of princes and patrons, for whose pleasure the artist essentially cultivated his art, are greater in number.

Whether the Jammu School of painting is an offshoot of the Kashmiri *qalam* or an independent creation, is difficult to determine with any accuracy. The fact, however, remains that the local Jammu School imbibed in its traditions much of the inspiration and genius of the Rajasthani paintings, like all other local offshoots. Yet, notwithstanding the local peculiarities, it shares with the paintings of Kangra, Tehri-Garhwal and other regional groups, a unity and affinity quite characteristic of the whole Himalayan group.

The Local Styles

There is yet another distinct variety of the school. This was the local *qalam* or style of the small *jagir* of Poonch, which though owing a nominal allegiance to Kashmir, remained independent and intact in its internal administration. It appears that some local artists flourished at the court of Poonch also, and they produced a few notable portraits and sketches of their reigning patrons. The Poonch style is midway between the more elegant and graceful style of the Pahari *qalam* and the less polished style of the Jammu *qalam*. Though varied and scattered, these various specimens of pictorial art, in the Valley proper at Jammu and at Poonch, represent an underlying unity which is basically Indian in conception and thought.

19

THE OASIS OF PEACE

The solitary and secluded land of Ladakh is an oasis of peace in the heart of the Himalayas. Situated in the Eastern region of Kashmir it has been for centuries the abode of the Buddhist Lamas. A plateau, rising nearly 12,000 feet above the sea-level, Ladakh, with its steep and massive rocks, forms one of the loftiest territories in the whole world, with the people living on an elevation varying from 12,000 to 15,000 feet above the sea. The average height of the peaks around it ranges between 17,000 and 21,000 feet, though some of them reach even upto 25,000 feet.

The plateau, nearly 30,000 square miles in area, is surrounded by high and lofty mountains. Sombre and ochre-coloured granite rocks surround the area on almost all its sides, while the local vegetation is sparse. A few wild stems and brushwood, including some poplar groves, willow trees and heavy walnuts, shoot forth from the deep ravines and *nullahs*, thereby adding spots of beauty to its landscape. A few fresh-water and crystal-clear lakes and the glistening glacial waters, bounded by eternal snows, break the monotony of the landscape in the higher regions. Thus protected from external onslaughts, Ladakh has remained all through its history an eternal home of peace and contentment, almost sealed to the outside world. The land, therefore, knows no crime, there is hardly a jail in the whole of Ladakh, and its people, impelled by extreme punctiliousness in matters of moral and spiritual behaviour, seldom commit any theft or robbery.

A Unique Country

Ladakh is a unique and strange country, presenting extremes and contrasts. Its climate is of a severe kind—swelteringly hot in summer due to the vast tracts of inhospitable ranges, and intensely dry and cold in winter. Severe piercing winds blow over Ladakh in autumn. Rainfall being scanty, vegetation is limited. The Ladakhis are generally agriculturists. But as the country is largely barren, only a very small section of the population can live on it. Sheep-grazing is, therefore, common on the uplands of Rupshu, forming thereby the main source of livelihood for the nomads, called *Chang-pas*. These nomads live mostly in tents made of hides, and roam from place to place with their flocks of long-haired goats and sheep, guarded by huge ferocious mastiffs. The *Chang-pas* have no permanent homes and live mostly on high pasture-lands ; their food consists of yak meat and yak butter-milk which is preserved in leather-bags. The *Chang-pas* carry their temple or sanctuary in their moving tents, each tent having a tiny figure of the deity and a few brass utensils used for performing the religious ceremonies. The family, after a whole day's work, collects in this sanctuary and offers prayers to the deity for protection from the cold and dreary winds and inhospitable ways of nature. Annually, they make trips to the central market-place to buy provisions for the coming year as well as to settle accounts with a trader or nobleman whose flocks they might have undertaken to tend. The main food of these *Chang-pas*, as of all Ladakhis, is milk, tea and barley-flour called *Tsamba*.

Gay Family Life

In Ladakh, agriculture depends on canal irrigation. Women work along with their men-folk in the fields, and

A SHEPHERDESS IN LEH WITH HER FLOCK

at the time of ploughing or harvesting, the whole family extends a helping hand. On such occasions, the Ladakhi family presents an extremely gay and colourful appearance surpassed only by the gaiety and picturesqueness of a marriage or a religious occasion. The whole family—men, women and children—work together in the fields, the work being distributed among the members to each according to his or her ability or liking. During breaks, they would collect together for tea or for meals. They sing and dance as they work, and, while the men often do the more strenuous part of the job, the women-folk keep them happy and cheerful by occasionally lilting melodious folk-songs and dances characteristic of these people. And, in the evenings, when the sun is about to set in the distant haze of dusk, the whole family wends its way homewards with their flock of cattle and meagre belongings.

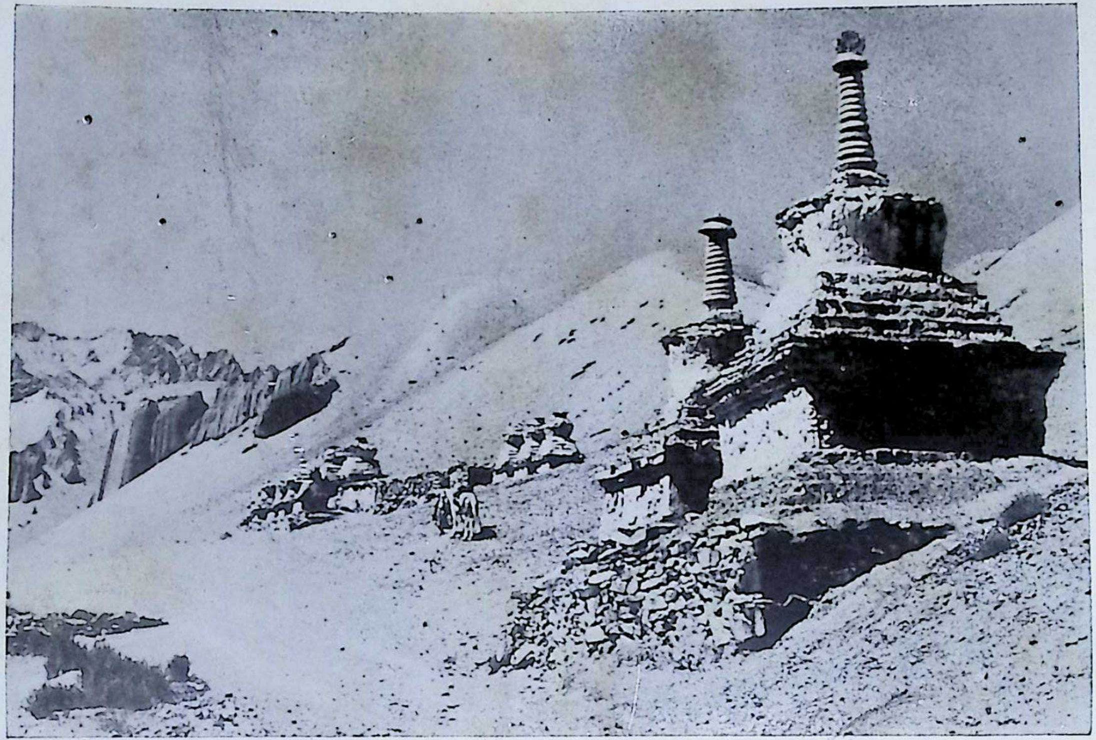
The Zho—a hybrid between the Yak and the cow—is usually employed for ploughing the land. Barley, wheat, buck-wheat, peas, rapeseed, beans, turnips and lucerne form the main agricultural produce of this country. *Grim*, a kind of barley, is abundantly grown at an elevation of 14,900 feet, while fruits—apples and apricots—are grown in warmer regions below 9,000 feet. *Grim* is also used in the manufacture of *Cheng*, the local brew or the favourite drink of the Ladakhis.

Colourful Dresses

The picturesque landscape which surrounds the Ladakhis finds a reflection in the colourful dresses and the glamorous stone-jewellery which the inhabitants love to wear. The men and women wear pig-tails while the women tack on to their hair the tortoise-studded head-dress shaped like a big fan. Simple, industrious and intensely religious, the Ladakhis are an amiable set of people. Despite their country's poor resources and harsh climate, the Ladakhis are a happy and jovial people. They possess a spontaneous sense of humour which serves them well in their daily life. Feasts among them are common, while dances by women frequently form the principal part of an entertainment. The performers are as remarkable for their graceful movements as for their costumes.

A Land of Monasteries

Almost the entire population of Ladakh is Buddhist. It is divided between the two sects called the Red Hats and Yellow Hats, the former representing the more orthodox and conservative of the two. Ladakh today is the only part of India where Buddhism is still the principal faith. On entering Ladakh, one is struck by the number of its massive monasteries and heavily-robed monks, the Lamas. Almost every Ladakhi family has a little boy wearing the Lama's red cap or a little girl with the cap of a *Chomo*, or nun, dedicated to the local monastery. These colourful red caps, proudly sported by the Lamas, are matched only by their bright waist-bands, which are also red in colour. The pious Ladakhi turns his prayer-wheel and gazes in reverence at the bronze images and delicate *Tankas* or painted banners on the walls depicting the life of the lord. The monasteries are large and spacious; in some cases, they are bigger even than villages. These are generally located on the spurs of high mountain cliffs, like the *gompas* of Tsampo and Hemis, rivalling the grandeur of the nine-storeyed palaces of the ancient kings of Leh. Each of these monasteries has attached to it agricultural *Muafi*-lands whose produce, along with the grain collected by the Lamas at the harvest time, is the chief source of their maintenance, apart from the offerings made by the devotees. All the monasteries house hundreds of Lamas, and in some cases nuns also, who have dedicated them-



ENTRANCE TO A MONASTRY IN LADAKH

selves to the service of their religion. Every rich nobleman in the village has a private temple or sanctuary of his own, which is in the charge of a Lama. The monastic order, which is the fundamental basis of Ladakhi life, thus forms a considerable part of the total population of the region. Despite their large numbers, the Lamas command respect and are accepted as the religious preceptors of the people, with the result that Lamaism is the dictator of Ladakh and the word of a Lama can be a law of the land.

Ladakhi Buddhism

There is hardly anything in common between the original teachings of Buddha and the form of Buddhism prevalent in Ladakh, which has its fountain-head in Lhasa. The Dalai Lama is the final authority, and is responsible for appointing religious heads or *Skushoks* of all the *gompas* or monasteries, the chief of which are situated in the villages of Lamayuru, Ridzong, Likir, Phiang, Spituk, Summur, Trikse, Mashro, Hemis and Hanle. Idols and images adorn their *gompas* or monasteries, just like the Hindu temples. On all ceremonial occasions, of which there is no dearth in Ladakh, these monasteries and temples are thronged by the people in their thousands, for offering prayers and securing the Lama's blessings. Sometimes the monasteries are also used for staging community plays and religious dances.

The religious and social life of Ladakhis is based on their environment. The land on which the people depend for their livelihood is neither adequate nor very fertile. It is, therefore, essential that there should be some check on the growth of population. This is secured through the monastic order and the prevalent system of polyandry. The monks, both men and women, in practice, remain unmarried, though marriage among Lamas is not expressly forbidden. The large number of

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी

Lamas are thus intimately connected with the general economy of the country.

Elder Father and Younger Fathers

The Ladakhis practise a form of fraternal polyandry. If the eldest son gets married, his wife automatically becomes the legitimate wife of the younger brothers also. The children thus have an 'elder father' and also one or more 'younger fathers'. As this custom has been prevalent in the land for centuries, the whole outlook and sentiment of the people is unable to conceive of any other family system. Though the intensity of family affection characteristic of monogamy is absent, a diffused affection for all in a family does exist. This system has served the Ladakhis well, exercising a healthy check on a disproportionate increase in the population.

Although women in Ladakh enjoy full freedom of movement, they have very limited rights in family inheritance, as patrimony is never divided and only one heir is recognised in each family. Hereditary property thus remains perpetually intact and protected.

Born Traders

The Ladakhis are born traders. While the women generally manage retail trade, the men look after big business and often undertake long journeys also for business purposes. Ladakh is particularly rich in salt which is obtained from a number of salt-lakes. But the main commercial product of Ladakh is wool—one of the finest in the world—which is obtained from the soft underwool of the sheep and goats. It is from this wool that the legendary Kashmiri shawl is woven. So, while Ladakh chiefly exports salt to Skardu and Kashmir, and wool, borax and dried fruits to other places, it imports tea; tobacco, grains, sugar, matches, dried fruits and ponies through Lahoul and Kashmir. Further, as religion occupies a central place in the life of the Ladakhis, a thriving trade flourishes in images and other religious objects.

Ladakh is rich in mineral wealth also. The deposits of gold and copper, as well as precious stones that it is said to contain, deserve to be explored more extensively.

A Good Hunting Ground

Ladakh holds a great attraction for sportsmen and hunters also, as it has some of the best hunting and shooting grounds in Asia. It is the home of *Markhor* and ibex. The Nubra Valley in the north provides an excellent hunting ground for the ibex and *Gurhal*. Besides, other game like red bear, snow leopard, *Sharpu* or wild sheep, Tibetan antelope, gazelle and marmot are also widely distributed in many of its ravines.

Strategic Importance

The importance of Ladakh lies in its unique strategic and geographical situation in Asia. It lies 250 miles to the east of Kashmir, between the Himalayas and the Kuen Len mountains, and between Baltistan and Tibet, including the areas of Rupshu in the east, Zanskar in the south, Nubra in the north, and fertile regions extending upto the areas of Kargil, Middle Ladakh and the plateau south of the Karakoram in the west. Its valleys extend along the main source of the rivers Sindh, Sutlej and Chenab. Ladakh's elevation and isolation makes it almost a sky "window" on the high roof of Asia. Leh is its chief town and capital, situated at a height of 11,554 ft. above sea level. Surrounded by a picturesque scenery of silvery poplars and delicate willows and wild roses, it forms a striking contrast against a background of bare rugged hills, where not even a blade of grass can grow in winter.

Great Centre of Trade

From the early dawn of history, Ladakh has been a centre of trade and land-routes on the highway map of Asia. Leh, its capital, has been the chief centre of these routes. As in days of old, so even today, caravans and tradesmen of various nationalities and different races gather together in the local *serais* or inns to exchange and barter goods. One can imagine how in the days before the Christian era, when the means of communication were undeveloped and amenities of life were few, flourishing trade and prosperity sprang up in rich Buddhist monasteries and *Viharas* all along the way to Central Asia and the Far East. The Buddhist creed and art traditions enriched these cultural and commercial centres, making them meeting-grounds for the fusion of varied yet akin ideas.

A VIEW OF LEH, CAPITAL OF LADAKH

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COLOURFUL PAGEANTRY

LAND of monastic orders and holy *Gompas*, for centuries past Ladakh has also been renowned for the colourful pageantry of its religious dances or "mystery-plays." These dances originating in superstitious beliefs and practices, form an integral part of Ladakh's religious functions and festivals. Ladakh's shrines and temples, austere monasteries and *Viharas*, secluded from common habitats, are the centres for staging the mystery plays. The themes presented are symbolic : the struggle between Good and Evil being invariably the central theme.

The religious dances of Ladakh are also a feature of the religious and social life of the adjoining countries like Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. Few visitors to this mysterious land could remain unmoved by these religious dances of the Ladakhis. Every book of Ladakh has dwelt upon this colourful theme ; every visiting painter and artist has recaptured in brush and colour the life and vigour of its dramatic themes.

The Origin

Indeed, these mystery-plays or religious dances, one of the cardinal rituals of the Lamaite Buddhists, are not confined to Ladakh or Western Tibet alone. They constitute the main plank of Buddhist socio-religious customs in all neighbouring countries. The origin of the mystery-dances is shrouded in myths and legends. One legend has it that these "Lama Dances"—as they are often called—originated in Tibet out of a discourse held between Hoshang Mahayan, a Chinese monk of the Bon religious order and Padma Sambhava, the great Indian

Tantric teacher and founder of Red Sect Buddhism in the land. The story of this controversy, which may or may not be historical, is worth repetition.

Discourse led to dispute, goes the story, and it was agreed between the Chinese monk and the Indian teacher that whosoever reached the Mount Everest peak first would be the winner and that his religion would be recognised as the religion of the land. The race started: while the Chinese monk began making rapid strides towards the mountain peak, Padma Sambhava sat deeply meditating at the foot of Mount Everest. At last the Chinese monk reached the top—to find to his consternation that seated upon a golden throne on the high pedestal of Mount Everest was Padma Sambhava himself. Since then the religion of the land was the Red Sect of Buddhism. This story is also responsible for the century-old belief which has persisted that Mount Everest is sacred, and that it is the abode of Padma Sambhava alone. No mortal should place his feet there—one of the reasons why Ladakhis have not co-operated with foreigners in their attempts to reach Mount Everest.

The Mystery Plays

This story, howsoever mythical and imaginary, has apparently some historical back-ground. The Lama dances or the mystery-plays, which came to Tibet in the wake of Buddhist influences, prove a link between the aboriginal Bon religion and later-day Buddhism. Indeed, one could say it was possible that Padma Sambhava was in a way instrumental in uprooting the demonical beliefs and evil practices common to the indigenous faith. He it was who first brought Tibet into contact with a relatively enlightened creed founded on love of humanity and on rational thinking. Superstitious beliefs and pagan practices, as well as human sacrifices so common to the native *Bon Pa* religion were thus, in the course

A LADAKHI WOMAN WITH HER CHILD

of time, more or less completely eliminated.

Hence Lama dances depict this ancient conflict between the two forces : Good and Evil. They show the defeat of the demonical forces by the good ones. These dances, performed to perpetuate the memory of, and to honour pseudo-historical events important to Buddhist religion, last from three to six days. In these dance-dramas, a prominent character role is that of Padma Sambhava, who is one of the central figures of Lamaistic Buddhism.

According to historical evidence, the first Lama Dance was performed during the reign of King Lang Dharma of Tibet. The King, who was a staunch protagonist of the Bon religion, could not remain indifferent to the spread of Buddhism in his land. He persecuted many devotees of the new faith. To save Buddhism from being exterminated, a pious Buddhist Lama, named Durji Tagespa, enticed the tyrant-king to the first Lama dance and while the king was busy watching it, the Lama, pulled out a bow from under his flowing robes and shot an arrow, instantly putting an end to the king's life. Thus was removed one great threat to the survival of the Buddhist creed in the land of the Manasarovara.

Pageantry in Majestic Surrounding

The festival, which marks the birthday of Padma Sambhava, the founder of the Red Sect Lamaistic Buddhism, is held annually on the tenth day of the fifth Buddhist month. The ceremony starts on different dates, sometimes even twice in some places. On a particular day of the New Year, the Lamas and monks of the local monastery, attired in long ceremonial robes of Indian brocades and soft Chinese silks, enter the open space of the courtyard of the monastery to which they belong. The minuteness with which the many details of the performance are executed and the punctiliousness bestowed on the completion of every little detail in the costumes and dresses of the actors and dancers, is truly remarkable. First come the Lamas, dressed in their flowing red robes, and then the monks and musicians heralding the customary festival amidst a chorus of holy *mantras* and the sound of tumultuous music produced by the bugle, the drum and the conch-shells. Then follows a host of human actors, wearing human masks and animal effigies, depicting the various demons or animal figures, engaged in a death-struggle between the pious and the evil. More and more actors appear on the scene, as the story expands and the mystery unfolds, while Padma Sambhava, the benign spirit of Lamaistic Buddhism, captures the centre of the stage. The demonical spirits and the animal-forces strengthen their efforts, still hotly pursued by the righteous ones, till the latter overpower them completely. Sitting in the open space of their village monastery, the spectators dressed in their best, watch and listen to all this with rapt attention.

Such is Ladakh, the legendary land of seeming contradictions: with its rich mountain-tops and green poplar-groves contrasting against the steep and denuded granite rocks; its tangled forests and walnut trees standing against the bare ochre-coloured ridges; its picturesque and laughter-loving people existing against the background of privation and suffering. Yet, in spite of nature's harsh and inhospitable ways, Ladakh continues to be the centre of attraction for explorers and tourists.

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HIDDEN TREASURES

LYING in the lap of the Himalayas, the State of Jammu and Kashmir, covering an area of 84,471 square miles, has vast mineral potentialities. But while deposits in the regions of Jammu and Kashmir have been tapped, those of the frontier districts of Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit still remain hidden from the geologist's eye. The huge mountains and forests, hills and ravines, which this area covers offer a bright promise of unexplored wealth which, if discovered and properly utilized, could transform the economy of the land.

Recent discoveries in the province of Jammu show that large fields of coal—estimated at about eleven million tons—exist at Ladda and Anji in the Udhampur district. Though mixed with a large quantity of dirt, this could be washed and briquetted, and processed to yield high-grade coal, perhaps similar to that of the Bengal coal. Coal mines on a small scale are also being worked at Janglagali and Kalkot.

Iron ore which is so essential for industries, is reported to have been found in large quantities at Sof in the south of Kashmir. It has also been discovered in the Reasi District of Jammu Hills and has been used successfully in local furnaces for the production of ammunitions.

Kashmir has a number of copper mines also. Copper ore is found in the Liddar Valley to the south-west of the mountains which divide Kashmir from the Ladakhi districts of Suru. Isolated masses of pure copper also occur in the Zaskar river-bed.

Lead is found in certain mountain areas of Ladakh.

Great Forest Wealth

Forests, which once extended over about one-eighth of the total area of the State, are a source of great wealth. A number of industries connected with the forests, like honey, wax, rosin, turpentine, sports, fibre, paper and rayon, have bright possibilities for the future. Medicinal herbs and plants, which are found on the heights of the Himalayan ranges, bring a large income to the State. The State has a well-equipped Drug Research Laboratory in Jammu. The immense potentialities of Kashmir's forests and rivers can be exploited to the fullest extent to obtain power for the development of various industries.

Extraction of lignite is an old established industry at Nichhama in the Handwara Tehsil and at Badgam in Kashmir.

Ladakh abounds in clay and crystalline mica rocks which can be split into slates and used for the construction of roofs for buildings. Mica deposits have also been found at Danni Tehsil in the Muzaffarabad district.

In Ladakh extensive deposits of clay, adhere to the sides of ravines and cliffs. Thus for example large deposits of such clay are to be found in the depression area of the granite rocks near Spituk, situated to the south-west of Leh, in a ravine of the Yunam river and the Nubra Valley in the north. However, the most remarkable deposits of clay are to be found immediately below Lame Yurru.

Steatite, another mineral deposit, is found on the banks of the Dras river, near Taskyum Bridge.

Abundance of Limestone

Lime can be obtained from the lime-stone rocks which are abundant on the range that divides Rukshu from Zanskar and further on the banks of the Indus in the Photo and Hanu Passes. Lime is also found at both the extremities of the Pangkong Lake and in the whole belt extending from Sessar to the high peaks of the Karakoram range.

Kashmir possesses a variety of marble obtained from some of its limestones. The fossiliferous limestone of Kashmir, which was used in the construction of the Shalimar Garden pillars, is particularly noted for its fine lustre and polish. A fine variety of striped marble-like *Suleimani* stone occurs in the bed of the Shyok river, between Chong-Ulang and Dong-Bailak in the northern regions of Ladakh.

Gold and Precious Stones

In Ladakh small quantities of gold are to be found in the sands of the Indus and the Shyok rivers. Washing of sands is generally done by the professional workmen of Baltistan from Skardu or Gilgit, the profession being hereditary and confined only to a few families. The Buddhists of Ladakh, because of their religious injunctions, refrain from this type of work. Gold is also found in the region of Chang Thang but its extraction seems to have been prevented by some local fear of a supernatural being, the *Genii*, supposed to rule over this region. Gold, in small quantities has recently been found at Gulmarg also.

Kashmir has large deposits of precious stones as well. Garnets, though of inferior quality and brown in colour, are found at Puga in a rough gritstone rock. Valuable sapphires were discovered in Zaskar Range in 1882, but this high quality stock got exhausted by 1908. Nevertheless, the existence of large deposits of crystallized transparent corundum used in grinding precious stones, as also for watch jewels, is still suspected. Sapphires are found in Paddar district. Besides this, there are large deposits of crystallized rocks suitable for ornamental cups, plates and handles.

Plumbago, though of inferior quality, is found in Baltistan.

Borax and Sulphur

Gypsum, both in the form of pure white flakes and compact rock, with crystals of sulphur attached to it, is abundant in the State and is found at the sulphur mines on the banks of the Puga river, on the right bank of the Spiti river below Rosar, and on the banks of Shigar river in Baltistan. Gypsum is useful in the preparation of sulphuric acid, cement and plaster of Paris.

Sulphur is obtained at the Puga sulphur mine in Ladakh situated at a short distance from the Rulangchu stream. Incidentally this region also harbours many hot-water springs. Sulphur occurs either in the form of thin opaque laminee disseminated throughout the rock, or in the form of pure transparent crystals attached to the gypsum. It is exported in large quantities from Ladakh to the distant markets of Nurpur, Kangra and Rampur.

Borax is found along with Sulphur at Puga, on the banks of the Rulang-Chu. Ladakh and Tibet are, in fact, the chief borax-producing areas in the whole of the State. It is thrown up in the form of boracic acid by the numerous hot springs. The banks of the stream for miles and miles lie almost covered with this white saline substance which is used in the glass industry and for making artificial gems, soaps and varnishes, as also for enamelling purposes.

Soda sub-carbonate is obtained from the saline masses of matter found on the banks of the Thogji Chanmo Lake in Rukchu.

Muriate, or hydro-cholorate of magnesia, is found in the deposits on the banks of the Tshomoriri Lake. Salt is also obtained from the banks of the same Lake.

Arseno Pyrite occurs in a large quantity in Bhutna Valley in Ladakh. Arsenic is used in glass and pharmaceutical industries.

Kashmir is thus rich in natural resources of a large variety, and the land offers plenty of opportunities for making life happy and prosperous.

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GOLDEN SYNTHESIS

KASHMIR has been famous for its artistic traditions and architecture no less than for its rich meadow-lands and scenic charm. Of these, the former bear testimony not only to the innate artistic urge and imagination of its people, but also to that spirit of assimilation which has permeated the land all through its ancient past.

The Valley abounds in impressive architectural remnants and ruins. These have been scattered over the entire length and breadth like a network of vivid symbols, embodying its past greatness. Of the pre-Christian architectural style, few monuments, with any exact impress, have been discovered so far; the only monuments which could be assigned to the Kushan period, with any degree of accuracy, being those of the Buddhist type at Harwan and Ushkar. However meagre and vague the details of these ancient structures, they bear upon them indelible marks of the Indo-Greek influences of the Gandhara School situated in the North-West. That close political connections existed between the Valley and the principalities of Peshawar, Taxila and Kabul, even a generation or two after the death of Kanishka, is obvious from these remnants. Except for a few minor differences, in the choice of the material used or otherwise, these ancient Buddhist structures of Kashmir possess practically the same details, evince the same plan and exhibit probably the same elevation as those in the contemporary buildings of the Gandhara kingdom. While the architects at Ushkar made good use of the stone chip masonry obtained from local quarries, at Harwan free and liberal use was made of the "diaper-pebble" style, consisting of small round pebbles mixed with large and solid blocks made available from the Dachigam Nala.

A Continuation

Coming then to the Hindu period and the medieval architecture, the continuation of the same older traditions, slightly altered and adapted to suit the religious needs of the changing times, is evident. The Hindu buildings of this period may roughly be divided into two classes—the Buddhist and the Brahmanic. While the Buddhists, long trained in principles of art and architecture, adhered to their older models, with the exception of the choice of better and finer building material in the use of smooth grey lime-stone thereby giving better finish and richer decorative results, the Hindu architects on the other hand altered the minor details of their prototypes to suit the requirements of their own religious system. Yet the Hindus, too, required a temple and a chamber for the installation of their sacred deity as well as a courtyard or a spacious hall for accommodating their worshippers, no less than did the Buddhists. Hence it was that the needs of the two religious orders did not vary much and whatever slight variations or alterations there might have been, the Hindu temple and the Buddhist shrine followed a natural sequence of alteration and transformation.

The plinth of the old *stupa*, which was originally a plain rectangular structure with a single flight of steps, was now adapted to a square form with one or more offsets on each side widening into a courtyard and flanked on either side by low walls, embellished with rich sculptured reliefs in the classic style. A typical Hindu building built in this style is the temple of Parihasapura. This temple is a square chamber built upon a square base, similar to that of the *stupa*, except for the offsets and three stairs, and is enclosed by a plain wall with the entrance facing the temple stairs; the roof of the temple, like that of all later Hindu buildings in Kashmir, was sloping or pyramidal. This building represents the evolutionary process of the early Gandhara art at several stages.

Evolution of Architectural Styles

Another important group of Hindu edifices belonging to this very style are the ruins of Martand, the temple of the Sun-god, one of the grandest and the most refined of all the Kashmiri temples. The Martand and the Avantiswami temples show the evolution of the art in its more advanced stage—from the plain to the elaborate. These temples are built of limestone, showing a further improvement upon the rubble-stone masonry work used earlier at Ushkar and Harwan.

To the same class belongs the larger temple at Loduv, which though comparatively simpler and plainer in construction, bears close similarity to the "angular-roofed" *Vihara* of Gandhara. This temple, devoid of any decoration, is a plain circular structure internally, though externally it is square. The temple has a single opening—an arched entrance. This arch is semi-circular and is built of horizontal projecting courses. That the architects of Kashmir continued to derive their inspiration from Greco-Buddhist traditions evolved and perfected in the north-west, is also confirmed by the striking resemblance of this famous Hindu shrine to the *Vihara* of Guniyar in the Swat Valley.

An obvious development in the evolution of Hindu temples as a whole was the marked progress of elaborate decoration and choice of better and finer material used in the construction of buildings, that belong to a later period. While the architects of Kashmir in the earlier centuries (upto the 5th or 6th centuries A.D.) in Harwan and Ushkar, made use of the chips, pebbles and rubble-stone masonry, by the middle of the eighth century (as in the Martand and Avantiswami temples) they knew all that there was to be known of the architectural use of limestone and granite rock. Lalitaditya's reign saw the use of gigantic ashlar-dressed limestone blocks, giving an even better scope for decoration and fine finish.

Re-arrangement of Motifs

But the Hindu architects, however, did not invent many new forms either of design or of decoration. They simply re-arranged the motifs and designs handed down by their Buddhist predecessors. The Buddhist monastery or *Chaitya* was their prototype which was now adapted as their model at Loduv, improved upon at Martand and later on made a still more fitting place for worship at Shankaracharya. Comparing the Hindu temples with the Buddhist one finds that the size of the cells, which in the Buddhist temple constituted the main chapel, was gradually reduced in the Hindu temple for the accommodation of the holy image they worshipped; the width of the promenade in front of the cells was also shortened in the Hindu temple, and the columns, which in the Buddhist temples supported the roof, came to be used in the latter for purely decorative purposes, and sometimes, even these were done away with altogether.

And later, when Hindu rule lost much of its power and vitality, the religious buildings of Kashmir also lost much of their impressive grandeur. Not only the columns, but also other architectural features, such as the trefoil arch and pillars, degenerated into mere ornamental motifs. The dimensions of the temple were reduced to such an extent that ultimately it became only a small monolithic miniature, not more than 2 feet each way. And while the column came to be even dispensed with occasionally, the arch became shallower and shallower, so much so that in the cave-temple of Bumazu, there was barely an outline visible, while in the temple at Pattan, there was no arch at all. All these architectural features, formerly meant for utility purposes, were converted into mere ornamental inventions, to be filled or decorated with elaborate sculptured reliefs, geometrical figures and floral patterns. But the interior of the walls of the cells was still maintained plain, and the Hindu temple in its main outline remained esssentially the same. It continued to be built after the pattern of a Buddhist *chaitya* rising in the middle of a courtyard—as it appeared in the Kingdom of Gandhara evolved under the Indo-Greek inspiration.

Saracenic Influences

Coming now to the Muslim buildings of the fourteenth and later centuries, we find the patterns to be after the traditional architectural designs combined with new Saracenic influences. During this period Muslims were a negligible minority—and they also lacked experience to initiate any architectural style of their own. Hence the absence of familiar Islamic mosques with their cloisters and domes—features which characterised the Saracenic architecture in almost all countries. In Kashmir, on the other hand, the Muslims made good the use of material and designs left by their Hindu and Buddhist predecessors. The results were astonishing: the Hindu and Buddhist art traditions, when combined with the vigour of Islamic inspiration, culminated in a style at once marked by a grace and delicacy harmonized with a grandeur and stability all its own.

Typical examples of this phase of Hindu-Muslim architectural style of Kashmir are the mosque and the tomb of Sheikh Madin Sahib outside the Sangin Darwaza of the Hari Parbat Fort, the ruins of the mosque at

Vitasarnag, the mosque of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin on the Wular island and the tomb of Zain-ul-Abdin's mother at Srinagar. These Muslim mosques and tombs are so similar in style to their Hindu prototypes, that their distinctive features are difficult to be determined. All tombs are built square in plan. The mosques are either self-contained (square in shape like the tombs, such as the mosques of Madin Sahib and Shah Hamdan where the cloisters have been added later), or they constitute a group of square-planned structures linked together by a colonnade (as in the Jama Masjid at Srinagar).

Decorative Features

Hindu influences in Muslim architecture are also traceable in the addition of columns and other decorative features peculiar to the earlier architecture. The columns, which were originally used in the Buddhist temples for supporting the roof and later on turned into mere ornamental motifs in the Hindu shrines, were again utilized in the inner chambers of the Muslim buildings with very good effect and covered with elaborate designs in Saracenic character, as in the Naqshband Mosque. This feature, though indigenous in character, provided Muslim architects with a free scope to accommodate the various designs and patterns common in Saracenic decoration, i.e., conventionalized flowers and leaves, formal geometrical patterns and lines, bearing close resemblance to the stone-work of the Mughal buildings in India and elsewhere.

The mosque and tomb of Madin Sahib at Zandibal is important in many ways. It shows the extent of perfection to which the Muslim architect could make use of the material of earlier Hindu edifices. Both the mosque and the tomb were built (1483 A.D.) in the memory of the saint in the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin. The base of the tomb is square in shape. Even the arrangement of courses is identical with that of an ordinary temple base. The superstructure consists of four walls: the corner pilasters of the walls as well as pilasters of the niches standing upon bases, being surmounted by capitals, again purely Hindu in style. The wooden doorway of the main entrance is elaborately carved, and is flanked by two-fluted stone columns originally belonging to Hindu buildings. The group of ruins lying at Vitsarnag belongs to the same series.

Elaborate Carving

The mosque of Shah Hamdan or Khanqah-i-Mualla, situated between the third and fourth bridges on the banks of the Jhelum, in Srinagar, shows traces of Hindu influence. The mosque was built in the memory of this saint, who came to Kashmir to escape from the persecution of Timur in Central Asia. The exact date of this structure is not known. The tomb, built entirely of wood, is a sacred place for Muslims; although with its attractive spires and elaborate carving on windows and panelled doors, it has the look of a Buddhist edifice. Kashmir is noted for its geometric panelled ceilings in pine wood, elaborately carved and painted; and the best example of this work is Shah Hamdan's mosque, still celebrated for its carved woodwork and heavy corbelled cornices. Apart from the cloisters, which have been added to it at a later date, the original building is a square structure.

The history of the Jama Masjid in Srinagar is most interesting. While the mosque owes the origin of its conception to Sultan Sikandar, who is said to have laid its foundations in 1398 A.D., it was completed in 1408 A.D. and was beautified later by Zain-ul-Abdin, who also added to it a school for the maintenance of which a large estate was set apart. On no less than three occasions, this huge structure fell victim to the vagaries of time; yet on each occasion it was restored. The mosque is a quadrangle, roughly square in shape. Its chief features are the four *minars*, one in the centre of each side, covered by pyramidal roofs terminating in an open turret crowned by a high pinnacle. The roof of each *minar* is supported on eight wooden columns, which are plain and undecorated. The *minars* are connected by huge halls, the chief attraction of which is an array of 378 wooden columns supporting the roof. The mosque, thus, though with Saracenic features of spires and domes, seems to have been adapted from Hindu buildings with their characteristic features of columns and pillars.

Persian Inspiration and Hindu Origin

The tomb of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin's mother, situated in Srinagar, between the fourth and fifth bridges on the river Jhelum, fully bears the impress of its builder's personality. While the superstructure of the building is wholly on the Persian model, with its five domes of brick masonry embellished with blue bricks, the plinth with its filletted torus cornice is essentially Hindu in conception and origin and so is the trefoiled entrance and its massive side-pieces. In plan, the tomb is square in shape, with the angles substituted by rectangular projections. The superstructure follows the same plan, consisting of a single chamber in the middle with projections recessed internally at the angles, roofed over by five domes.

The chief attraction of the tomb, however, lies in the exterior walls which are studded with glazed and moulded blue bricks, a feature indicative of Persian inspiration. Immediately to the north of the building is a massive enclosure wall with a pierced gateway surrounding it, which on account of its massiveness and materials sufficiently proves its undoubted Hindu origin. This fact is further strengthened by the number of carved stones still lying near the site, bearing sculptured reliefs of Hindu deities.

Inside the mosque, hanging from an iron plate attached to the apex of the central dome, is an iron chain, which creates a misconception that the structure was originally a *Panchamukha* or five-faced temple, such chains having been familiar in almost all Hindu temples.

Coming to the Mughal period, we find a still larger number of buildings other than mosques and temples, bearing the stamp of mixed styles. *Pari Mahal* or the Fairy Palace, situated on the southern side of the Dal Lake, and to the west of Chashma-Shahi, is reminiscent of the days when it housed a School of Astronomy built by Prince Dara Shikoh for his holy preceptor, Mullah Shah. The Mullah was a revered teacher of Muslims and Hindus alike, welcoming both the communities to come and seek knowledge at his academy. The Hindu system of astrology was the principal subject taught in this academy.

Garden Planning

Yet the main achievement of the Mughals in Kashmir, lay in the genius of garden-planning, which made the rich and beautiful Valley one of the most charming spots on earth. The Mughals were great builders: they laid down the foundations of several gardens in the Valley, which like their other imperishable monuments of art and architecture, represent a golden synthesis of diverse and varied artistic traditions.

The Mughals, before coming to India, had a fine tradition of gardening and horticulture in their home-countries in Persia and Central Asia. The gardens in Persia and Turkestan were laid out in well-selected spots, generally on the slope of a hillside or on a plateau or across a valley near a spring or a stream. The selection of the site was thus the most important part in the plan and lay out of the garden. Not to a small degree was the irrigation system also responsible for the choice of these features, for the gardens were so constructed as to keep water always flowing in small artificial streams or channels, providing life and beauty through all seasons and at all hours of the day. Presence of water thus constituted the very life and soul of the Persian and Turkish gardens. Sometimes, the water-canals were even paved and decorated with coloured stones to bring out the beauty of the vivid patterns and designs through the crystal clear waters of the flowing streams.

An interesting feature worth noticing in connection with the gardens of the Persians and the Turks was that the *baradari* or the raised pavilion in the centre, which, though often employed as a summer-palace or a pleasure resort during the builder's life-time, was made to serve the purpose of a mausoleum on his death. Many of the celebrated gardens in Persia were thus turned into big mausoleums of eminent men attracting religious recluses and holy *faqirs* from far and near to take shelter therein. Occasionally, the gardens, after the death of the builder, were made over to religious organisations to earn piety and religious merit for the departed soul. Travellers came and stayed there, while the fruits obtained from the garden-trees were distributed to *faqirs* and poor people.

Scientific Traditions

Long nurtured in these scientific traditions of well-planned gardens, the Mughal rulers of India adorned the beautiful Valley of Kashmir with many a lovely garden. Almost all the Mughal gardens of Kashmir are built in beautiful surroundings, either on hillsides like the gardens at Achabal and Verinag, or across a valley just near a spring or a stream, like the Nishat and the Shalimar gardens in Srinagar. The system of central irrigation and tank construction, peculiar to Persia and Turkestan, was well harnessed to utility provided by natural facilities all round. The water in the Mughal gardens flows constantly in artificially laid out narrow water-channels, adding to the garden a beauty already bestowed upon it in plenty by nature. The canals and tanks in these gardens have been so constructed as to keep the water flowing to the very edge of the footpaths built on either side. The water runs through these gardens like innumerable arteries throbbing and pulsating with life, either falling smoothly from one level to another or into a tumultuous waterfall from a great height into a pool of white milky foam below. From the waterfalls, the canal is led to a big *hauz* or reservoir, studded with numerous little fountains. The central piece of this *hauz* is generally a huge fountain throwing up forceful sprouts of water. In nearly all the Mughal gardens, side-canals start from the reservoir and culminate in *baradaris* built into walls or *chabutras* or gateways.

The Mughal gardens of Kashmir are either square or rectangular in shape, divided into numerous square parterres. The gardens are enclosed by high massive walls, each side-wall having a central gateway. One gate, however, representing the main entrance of the garden, would always be bigger and more imposing than the other gates; while the angles of the walls would be marked by small octagonal buildings.

Indigenous Inspiration

But while the Mughals, in planning out the arrangement of their gardens, naturally looked back to the gardens in Samarqand, Tabriz and Ispahan, they could not but draw upon the inspiration of the indigenous garden traditions of the Hindus and Buddhists. The system of water-irrigation and tank construction, the keynote of the Persian gardening traditions, was followed by them in almost all their gardens in Kashmir and the rest of India. But they harmoniously combined this central feature of the Persian prototype with the artistically laid out plans of the flower-beds and trees, popular among the Hindus and Buddhists. Nature was revered by both Hindus and Buddhists; and to them one of the most appropriate offerings that could be made at the shrine of their sacred deity was flowers. Indeed, particular varieties of flowers were to be offered to some deities and not to others: the three varieties of lotus is an example. The Red Lotus symbolising the sunrise was to be offered only to Brahma, the Creator of the Universe; with the Blue Lotus, symbolic of the blue moon-tide, the devotee was to worship Vishnu, the Upholder of the Universe; the white Lotus, symbolic of death and resurrection, was an offering fit for Shiva alone—the Destroyer and Preserver of the Universe.

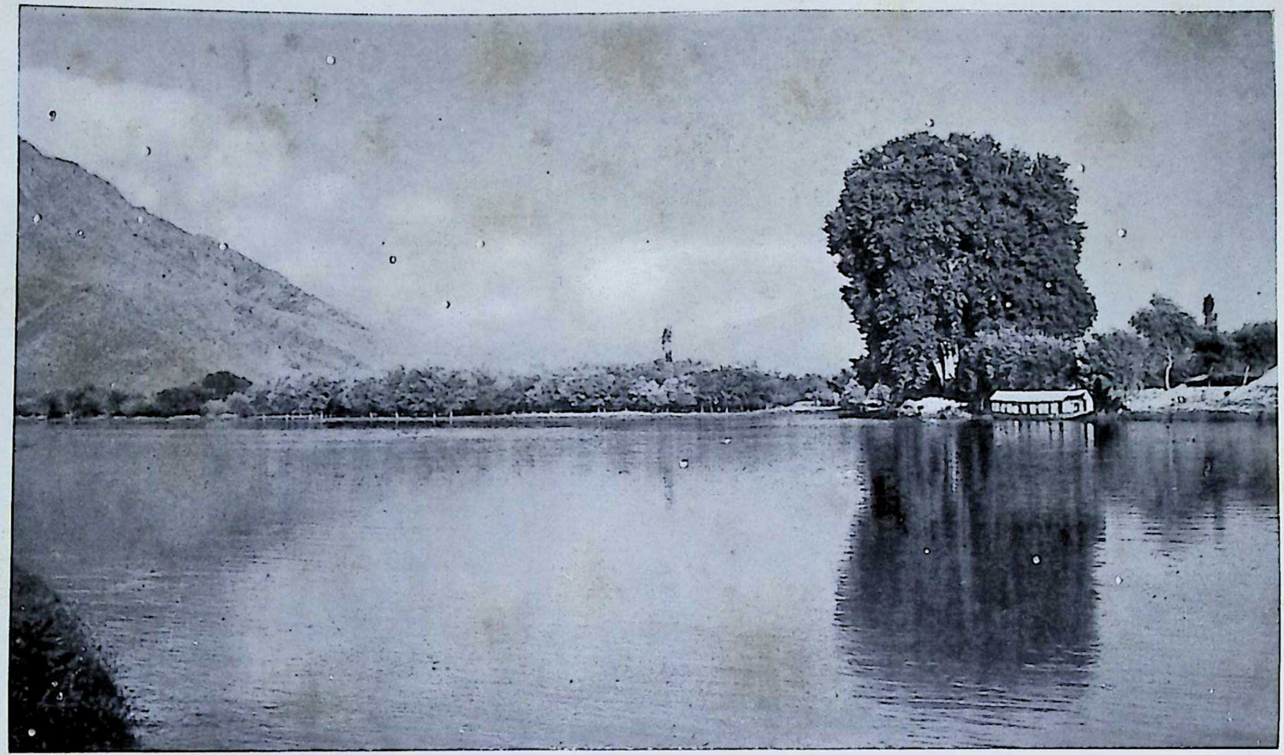
Flowers have inspired the Hindus to create forms of art absolutely new. The Jaina and Vaishnavite sects had also evinced deep attachment to flowers and trees. The sacred groves around the Buddhist shrines were quite famous and later developed into charming landscape styles of China and Japan.

Gulistan and Bostan

While in Central Asia and Persia, people considered a *Bostan* or an orchard as practically a necessity, the Hindu life in ancient India too was incomplete without a flower-garden. For, unless the daily offerings of flowers had been collected from the devotee's own flower-garden, it was considered that they were not worthy of acceptance by the gods. The Mughals in their gardens in Kashmir, as also in the plains, combined the orchard and a flower-garden into one harmonious whole and created green beauty-spots still unrivalled for their planning and loveliness.

There are detailed descriptions in scriptures of the gardens based upon the paradisical idea, and the Hindus in ancient India always planned their gardens after that. According to ancient sacred treatises, the gardens in paradise were supposed to include numerous arched openings, most often *Chaurasi*—a name originating from the number eighty-four, a multiple of twelve, the number of the signs of the zodiac, and seven, the number of the planets. Again, no garden could be complete without five particular trees which were considered sacred and lucky—*phalsa* (grewia asiatica), *bhila* (marking-nut tree), *punang* (rottlera finctoria), *sirisha* (mimosa sirossa) and *nim* (mela azardiraetha). The plan of thus regularly laying out flower-beds and trees, according to scientific number and propensities contained therein, was thus peculiarly Indian. But the Mughals knew how to adapt and evolve traditions. This happy synthesis of the two traditions—the Islamic and the Hindu, the Persian and the Indian, the Bostan and the Gulistan—lend to these gardens the touch that makes them distinctive from their counterparts in other lands.

The Mughals planted their trees and flower-beds in a definite planned manner. Around the water-streams or canals follows a thick borderline of rose-bushes and narcissuses, and other flowering plants. Arrayed behind them are the silent cypress trees—symbols of death and eternity. The outer walls are always bordered with thick, heavy shady trees, while the square-plots intersected by the water-courses are filled with fruit trees and elaborate patterns of flowers. There are also square plots of grass, shaded by large trees planted at the corners; while a big walnut or a *chenar* tree adorns the centre of these plots. Underneath the spreading *chenar*, the holiday-seekers recline and sing exhilarated with joy in nature's flora and fauna around them.



THE DAL LAKE: FOUR CHENARS ON AN ISLAND

23

GREEN BEAUTIES

KASHMIR is renowned for its green beauties, amongst which are the famous gardens of Chashma Shahi, Nishat, Shalimar, Naseem and Nagin. With the dawn of spring the gardens put on a thick mantle of green vegetation and growth, filling the air with perfume-laden breeze. The tiny little stems and plants, denuded and desolate before, put forth buds and blossoms of varied hues and tints. The branches and twigs begin to move and throb with life whispering sounds of rustling leaves. The little warblers and sparrows twitter and twiddle on the dancing boughs. And the gardens wake up from a deep lingering slumber beating and pulsating with life of the playful nature around.

Then streams of holiday-makers flock in their shikaras, and to the accompaniment of song and music, row their way to the blossoms and water cascades of the gardens. On many more days to come, in spring, summer and autumn, the people of Srinagar will steer their shikaras across the Dal towards these gardens. On Sunday afternoons, the gardens become the picnic-spots of the visitors when against the background of mountain ranges, and in the shimmering light of the bright noon-tide sun, they recall to mind the favourite lines of Emperor Jehangir :

"The garden-nymphs are brilliant,
Their cheeks shone like lamps ;
There were fragrant buds on their stems
Like dark amulets on the arms of the beloved.
The wakeful ode-rehearsing nightingale,
Whetted the desire of wine-drinkers !

At each fountain the duck dipped his beak,
Like golden scissors cutting silk;
There were flower-carpets and fresh rose-buds,
The wind fanned the lamps of roses,
The violets braided her locks,
The buds tied a knot in the heart."

Such then is Kashmir with its beautiful gardens and rich flower-carpeted valleys; its hills and dales filled with sweet-scented herbs. Wherever the eye wanders, there is greenery and blossoms, running waters and enchanting cascades—all beyond count and beyond description.

Many rulers of Kashmir have endeavoured to beautify the Happy Valley but none can rival Emperor Jehangir. Though the grandeur of his once mighty empire has long since vanished, the gardens he created bloom each spring, and in the resplendent glory of their choicest sites and loveliest of flowers, continue to resound with the soft murmur of the slow flowing cascades and rippling fountains, a fitting memorial to the Emperor's aesthetic taste.

Chashma-Shahi

The Chashma-Shahi, or the Royal Spring garden 5½ miles from Srinagar, is the smallest of the Mughal gardens in Kashmir. The centre of attraction in the garden is a pure crystalline spring rising from the base of the Zebanwan mountains (8,000 ft.) and enclosed in a lotus-shaped carved stone framework. The mineral water of this spring is reputed far and wide for its curative properties. The garden, as the inscription on the gateway indicates, was laid out by Emperor Shahjehan in 1632-33 A.D. on a plan parallel to that of the Nishat, though, of course, on a smaller scale.

The Chashma-Shahi is an ideal place for a holiday, commanding as it does from its lofty heights a panoramic view of the Dal Lake. In early spring and summer, when the sloping hill-sides around are covered with a flaming gold of rape-seed fields, when the flushing snows on the high peaks are melting slowly, when masses of trailing clouds float under the blue dome, and when the vast grounds of the Chashma-Shahi and the Hari Parbat hill are covered with a silvery glistening mist of almond flowers, the visitor is entranced with an unparalleled ecstacy. Far below lies the Dal with its calm waters, the grand patterns of the picturesque scenery mirrored on its surface.

Nishat

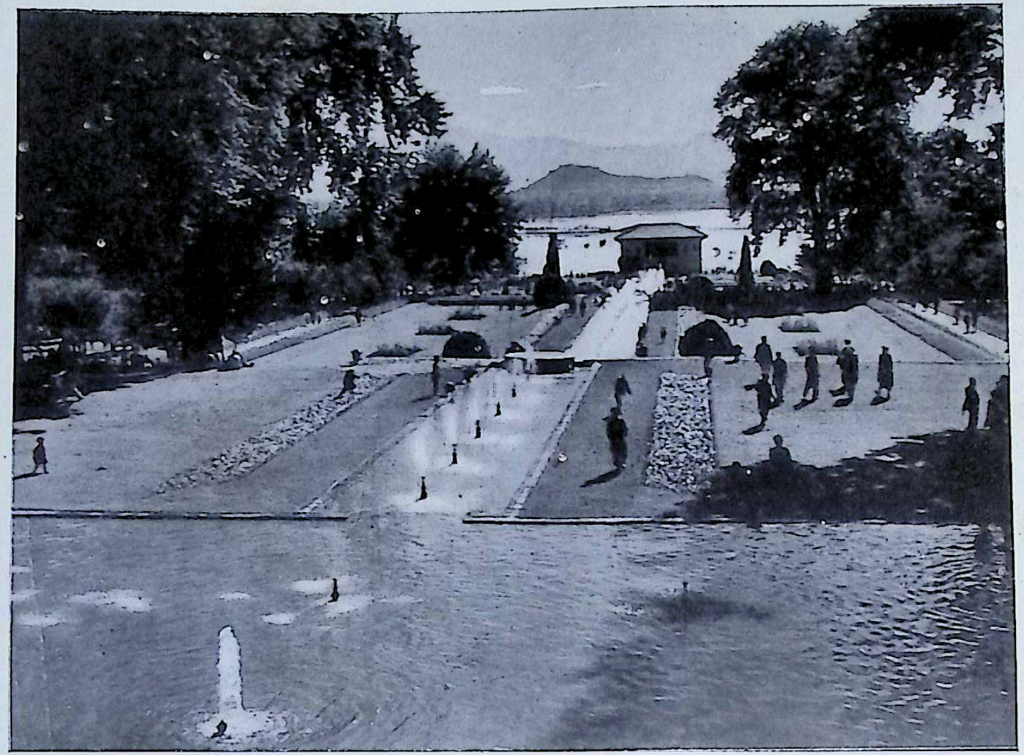
The Nishat Bagh, or the Garden of Delight, which is just 2½ miles from Chashma-Shahi, was laid out by Asaf Khan, the brother of Empress Nurjehan. The garden is accessible both by road and water, being 7½ miles by road and about 6 miles by water from Srinagar. The Nishat is the biggest Mughal garden in Kashmir. The enclosure is about 595 yards long and 360 yards wide. As one enters the garden, one can notice several terraces rising steadily one above the other. The twelve terraces are equal in number to the signs of the Zodiac, for that number is sacred to the Hindus. Nishat is alternately known as the "Garden of Terraces". The highest terrace at the end of the garden is the *zenana* or the private terrace, surrounded by a high enclosing wall for the privacy of the royal harem. The Nishat has features common to all the Mughal gardens of Kashmir. A canal passes through the centre of the garden, its water falling in swift but gentle torrents from one terrace to another, over square tanks studded with innumerable fountain-sprays. There is a small pavilion on the last terrace to serve as the *zenana*. Almost every waterfall in the Nishat has a stone or marble throne placed across its head. Artistically laid out flower-beds and fruit-plots, well-planned lines of cypresses and *chenars*, the running cascades and colourful fountains, and the green velvety lawns lend a unique charm to the garden. From its topmost terrace one can catch a fleeting glimpse of the vast Dal beyond, as well as of the Hari Parbat and the Pir-Panjal ranges.

Shalimar

Like the Taj Mahal at Agra, the garden of Shalimar was born out of an Emperor's love for his beloved. Yet, Shalimar is not a memorial. It was built in 1619 A.D. by Emperor Jehangir for his wife Nurjehan. Appropriately was the garden called Shalimar—"Abode of Love". This garden which is about 2 miles from the Nishat has picturesque surroundings. On one side is a hill and on the other the lake splashing its shores with its lapping waters. As if to harmonize the effects produced by the fountains and the vast expanse of water outside it, the Shalimar is connected with the Dal Lake by means of a mile-long canal. Kashmiris and tourists prefer to visit the garden by this canal route, though the Shalimar, like the Nishat, is also accessible by road. The garden, at the base of Mount Mahadev (9,000 ft.) is 590 yards long and 240 yards wide; and is situated at the north-eastern corner of the Dal Lake.

The impression created by Shalimar is different from that of Nishat. While in Nishat one senses the joy and buoyancy of nature, at the Shalimar one feels the awe and majestic beauty of scenery around.

The Shalimar too is built on a plan parallel to that of the Nishat. It is quadrilateral in shape, with four terraces of equal size. The garden is divided into three parts—the first containing a pavilion used by Jehangir for his public audience, the second used by the Emperor exclusively for his private audience, while the third, with a beautiful pavilion of black marble, was reserved for



NISHAT: GARDEN OF DELIGHT

the Empress and the ladies of the court. The central canal starts from this terrace and falls in sheets into basins or tanks studded with 150 fountains. Surrounded by fountains and running sheets of water, the garden thus presents a grand appearance. Pergolas and "trellised walks" border the fountains and the flower-beds. And, on Sundays, when the garden is illuminated and flood-lit, it wears a celestial garb. There is a freshness in the fragrance of Shalimar.

Naseem

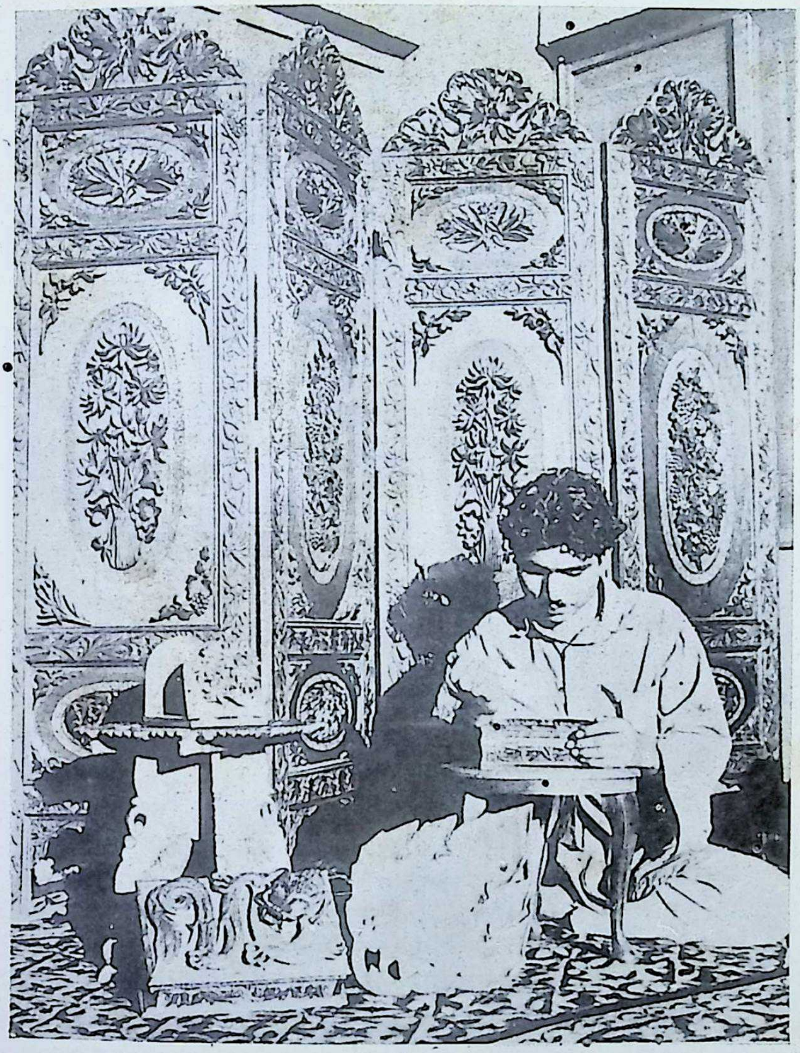
The Naseem Bagh or the "Garden of Bliss", built by Akbar after the construction of the Hari Parbat fort, is an excellent camping site near Srinagar. The Naseem is not a garden in the strictest sense of the term. It is a huge expanse of high ground covered with soft emerald turf and studded with thick entangled *chenars* planted symmetrically at short distances. Unlike other Mughal gardens, the Naseem has neither flower-beds, nor fruit-orchards, nor any fountains; it is a vast grassy lawn. Situated only 6 miles from Srinagar it is popular with visitors who pitch their tents and enjoy the unadorned beauty of nature around. When autumn is ushered in, and the tangled leaves of the *chenars* turn to a flaming gold, the garden presents a delightful spectacle.

Achhabal

The Achhabal garden, 39 miles from Srinagar and five miles from Anantnag, was the summer haunt of Emperor Jehangir and his queen Nurjehan. The garden, which like all Mughal gardens is laid out in terraces, is in some respects even lovelier and more enchanting than the Nishat or the Shalimar. For, while the latter are situated close to the gaiety and glamour of city life, the Achhabal represents the beauty of nature in her lonely mood. The Achhabal again has a natural water-supply unlike the Nishat and the Shalimar, which obtain their waters from a far-off source. The calm and quiet little *chenar* groves lead to the garden, and bright-hued flowers and fruits adorn it for the greater part of the year.

Verinag

But lovelier than Achhabal is the famous Verinag Garden at the foot of the Banihal mountain ranges near the source of the river Jhelum. Jehangir built here a beautiful octagonal tank. Close by, a garden was planned and laid out by Shahjehan. Throughout the garden runs a gushing stream carrying the waters from the Verinag spring. In a *chenar*-shaded camping site nearby one can find respite and solitude. That the builders of this garden were influenced in no small degree by Hindu art traditions is proved by the fact that the Verinag Garden still has a Hindu temple in one of its arches. Similarly, the remnants of the gardens at Harwan and those on the banks of the Manasbal Lake show features characteristic of the Hindu traditions.



WOOD-CARVING IN WALNUT

24

ARTS AND CRAFTS

KASHMIR is the homeland of various decorative arts and crafts which have been for centuries renowned for their charm and beauty. The most famous produce of Kashmir is its shawls which are unrivalled in their delicacy and gossamer-like fineness. Indeed, the Kashmiri shawl is legendary. The Kashmiri craftsmen are equally superb at moulding little lumps of paper-pulp into delicate luxury articles of various sizes and shapes with elaborate schemes of decorative designs painted on them. Their deft fingers can skilfully turn the simple rough walnut wood-blocks into articles of beauty and utility. No wonder then that on entering the shop of a Kashmiri craftsman—wood-carver, papier-mache worker, silver-engraver or any other—one is almost entranced and lost in admiration. The eye wanders in curious amazement from one artistic piece to another and one is filled with surprise and an admiration for those simple folk who live in want and poverty, and yet create by their talent handicrafts of beauty.

Papier-Mache

Papier-mache was introduced in Kashmir from Persia, and the Kashmir papier-mache, in its designs and floral patterns, still bears the impress of its Persian origin. This art of papier-mache, of moulding paper-pulp into articles of various shapes and sizes and painting designs upon them, is locally known as *Kumangiri*. Incidentally the present masters of this art who inhabit the locality of Kumangarpura in the heart of the city of Srinagar, trace their descent direct from the Persian craftsmen who brought the art to the Valley. The art is almost a family monopoly amongst their descendants.

But much more important than these historic facts are the details and designs painted on the papier-mache articles. The usual designs on papier-mache goods are birds, boats, trees and other choice items from the world of nature. It is a tribute to the artists and to their hereditary training that they can copy so faithfully the minutest details from memory. The designs and workmanship on some of the papier-mache articles of bigger size are after old Persian paintings. Elaborate schemes of Turkish and Mongolian princes playing polo, or warrior types of Persian origin dressed in classic costumes and fighting battles or chasing lions and antelopes, remind one of the beautiful illustrations in the Persian epic of Firdausi's *Shah Nama*. But the indigenous appeal is by no means lacking. The lovely figures of orioles and king-fishers, the *bulbuls* and the *mynas*, or the tiny little patches of blossoming flowers like the rose, the tulip, the lily, the iris, the daisy, the poppy and daffodil, woven into intricate designs of twigs and boughs, shows that the artist, be he original or imitative, could not remain indifferent to the appeal of nature around him. Delicate and attractive powder-bowls and beautiful toilette cases, fancy jewellery-boxes and multi-coloured table-lamps, are some of the common papier-mache articles sold in Kashmir.

Wood-Carving

And just as in papier-mache so in wood-carving, the exotic and indigenous elements have blended in peculiar harmony. Wood-carving is an ancient craft of the land. Kashmir is a land of forests and magnificent trees. Walnut trees grow in plenty in the Valley and partly because of the durability of the wood and partly owing to its rich natural-veined surface beautiful articles of varied designs can be made therefrom. Besides, its texture lends itself excellently to fine carving and polish. The wood is seasoned before being put to use, by exposure to various temperatures changing with the season and the time. It is the seasoned wood that is cut and polished and then carved into various articles of every day use, like flower-vases and trays, screens and book-ends, tables and chairs, cigarette cases and jewellery boxes, and many others besides.

There are three well-known varieties of wood-work—the engraved, the under-cut and the raised. After the wood has been carved and engraved it is polished with a fine piece of Jade thereby creating an effect of fine relief or sculptures.

But, there is an endless variety of design. Floral and geometrical designs of almost every conceivable variety in chased or raised work are wrought with great accuracy of detail. The hollowed-out designs are also indicative of exquisite skill ; sometimes the intricate twining lines of the designs—a creeper, a tree, a bush or a bough—are as thin and slender as a thread. Artistically mingled with these are conventional geometric patterns and zig-zag interlacings, concentric circles, or star-shaped figures. Wood-work reveals the rich imagination of talented fingers.

Besides, the famous *khatam-bandi* style of Kashmir ceilings is a speciality of the land, seldom reproduced or copied in any other part of the world. The *Khatam-bandi* style consists of small pieces of carved wood fitted into frames in geometrical designs to form decorative ceilings for rooms. All houses in Kashmir, without any pretensions to affluence, are decorated with these ceilings. The best specimen of *Khatam-bandi* is to be found in the exquisite Khanqah-i-Mualla mosque in Srinagar.

Silverware

Engraving on silver articles is another fine art of

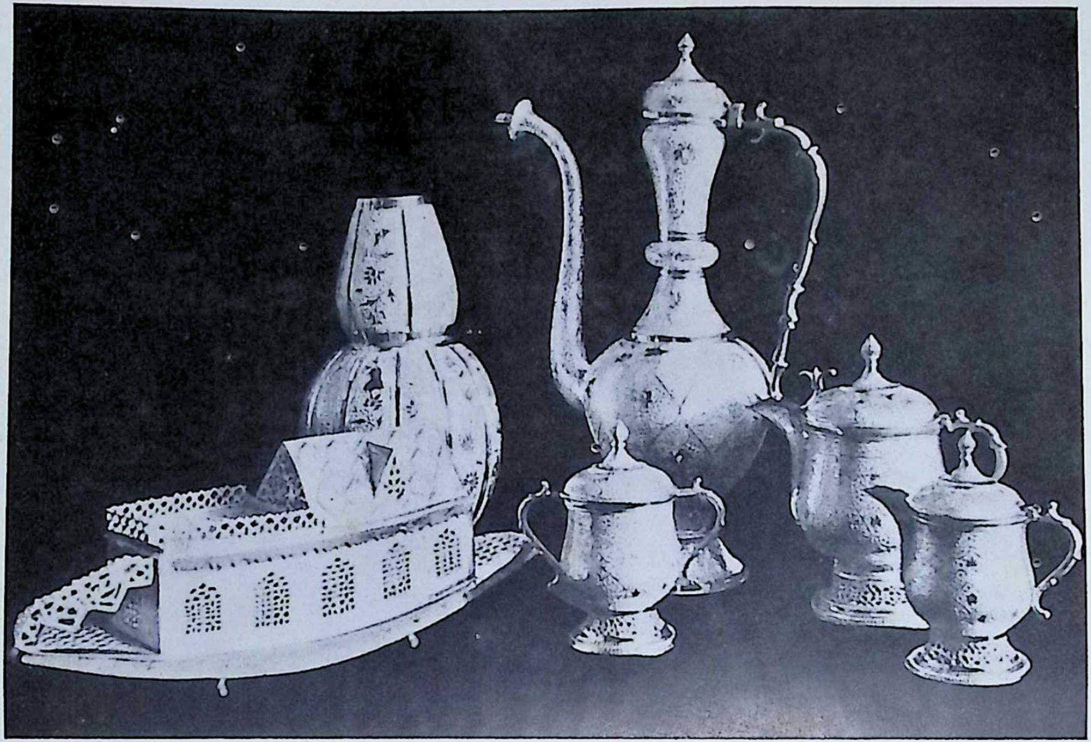
Kashmir. Engraved boxes, cups, bowls, tumblers, tea-sets, scent chests and toilet-sets, combs, caskets and picture-frames made of silver, are very popular. The peculiar white sheen of Kashmiri silver-ware is obtained by boiling the silver-work in apricot-juice. The finished designs of *chenar* leaves, palm-leaves and lotus-buds engraved on these articles are neat and delicate.

The Kashmiri craftsman is always alive to the picturesque surroundings about him. He expresses his response to the beauty around him in the creation of a large variety of chasing or embossing floral motifs interwoven into intricate patterns. The shawl-pattern, representing a chasing interlacing of foliage, is the chief speciality of Kashmir silver-engravers. Sometimes this design is expressed in filigree work as well. There is a second style, the *chenar* leaf, as distinct from the shawl-pattern. A third style, confined to Ladakh, is the Lhasa style representing motifs and designs in Tibetan character.

Copper Work

Kashmiri copper-work is chiefly an imitation of the Tibetan Buddhist art, but the introduction of conventional figures and carving of Islamic inscriptions has made the copperware very attractive.

There are also distinctive types of copperware to be found in Kashmir. One type coming from Ladakh and Tibet is distinguished by fantastic and fabulous figures of Chinese and Turkish characters, further embellished with motifs of dragons and "cloud-forms" either in relief or engraved. Articles of this kind are usually archaic tea-cups, plates, jugs, and urns. The effect is occasionally heightened by the inlay in silver. The other variety of copper-work, which is local and uninfluenced, shows a distinctive impress of indigenous surroundings in designs of the lilac, the poppy, the lotus or the rose. The finish and polish characteristic of these products show patient



KASHMIRI SILVERWARE

work by skilful and trained hands. Indeed, the art matured after generations had worked in this sphere.

Sericulture

The silk and the silk-embroidery industry of Kashmir are of very ancient standing. Even in that early historic period when the Greek and the Scythian civilization was at its height, Kashmir was connected with Bactria, both commercially and politically, and Bactrian raw silk came originally from Kashmir. The industry fell into inactivity in the middle ages, and it was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that interest was again evinced in the revival of the sericulture industry in the State. Today Kashmir produces a large variety of silks—like silk tabby, twill, chiffon, parachute silk etc.

The silk piecegoods manufactured in Kashmir are rendered particularly attractive by the fine embroidery work wrought by artisans with whom embroidery is a hereditary profession. A large variety of designs, flowers and leaves, entwined roses and narcissuses, poppies and tulips, lilies and *chenar* leaves, adorn the borders or the entire piece of these silken fineries. Flowering trees of almonds, plums and pomegranates are also embroidered in elaborate compositions of bright hues. Among birds, the most popular as copies for embroidery are the parrot, the magpie, the king-fisher, the woodpecker, and the sparrow. Butterfly designs, though popular, are not as much in demand as those of flowers and foliage.

The particular Kashmiri embroidery-work called *kasida* is world-famous. The cloth used for this type of embroidery is either silk or wool, and the embroidery yarn is preferably silk-thread, though wool imported from Yarkand is used for heavier embroidery work, as on shawls, *Namdas* and *Gabbas*. The embroidery-patterns show all the charm of freedrawing from memory and the balance of symmetrical compositions. The stitches used are the plain stitch and the "*Amli*" or the dense stitch. The latter is a most difficult one and is very popular. This *kasida* work is classified into different types—like *rafugari, Zalak dozi, vatachikan, doria* and *talaikar*. Embroidery work flourishes principally in Srinagar and the neighbouring towns, where saleable embroidered articles are produced in large quantities.

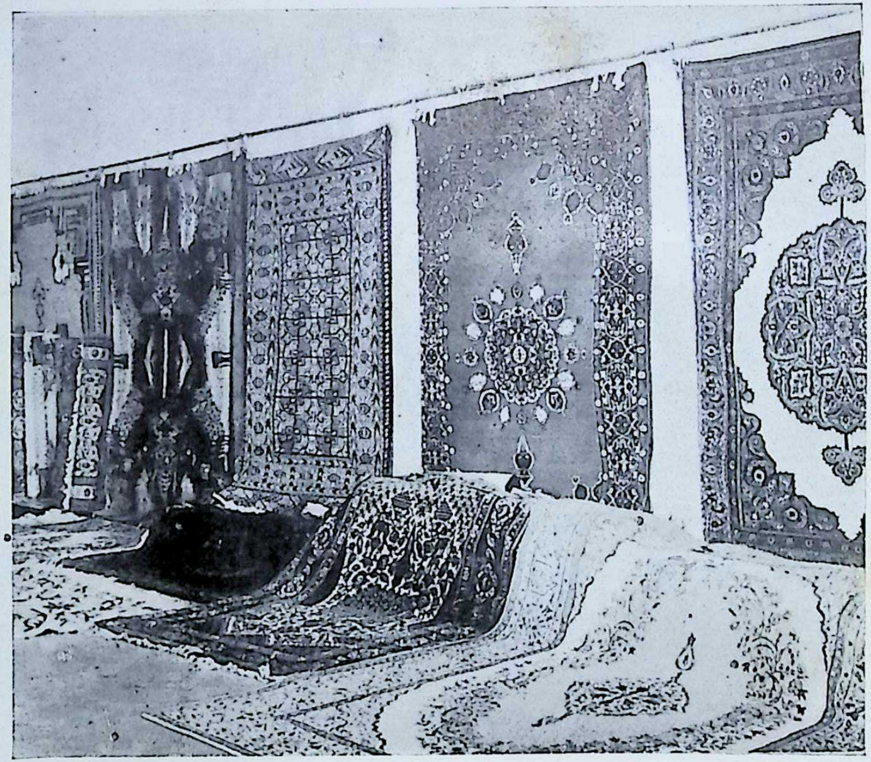
Gabbas and Namdas

In the manufacture of *Gabbas* and *Namdas*, the Kashmir embroiderers find free scope for displaying artistic imagination and skill. The *Gabbas* and *Namdas* are mostly used as floor-rugs and coverings, being cheaper substitute for carpets and rugs. Elaborate patterns of floral gardens, or bunches of fruit, or flowering trees symmetrically arranged in geometrical compositions based on the counter-designs of carpets and rugs, show the genius of the Kashmiri embroiderer at his best.

While the *Gabba* industry flourishes mainly at Anantnag, a town about 34 miles from the capital, the *Namdas* are embroidered and finished in the city of Srinagar itself. *Gabbas* are made from used and almost worn-out blankets. A number of such blanket pieces are dyed in different hues and stitched and patched together in long chain-stitch to form symmetries of pattern and design. The *Namdas* are imported as plain material from Yarkand and then embroidered in coloured threads or wool by embroiderers trained for generations in this art. The embroidery designs on *Namdas* are often stereotyped though the appeal of their bright-hued schemes continues to be fresh.

Rugs and Carpets

The majority of designs of the Kashmir embroiderer's art are reproduced or adapted from those on Persian and



KASHMIRI CARPETS AND RUGS

Turkish carpets, whose fabulous prices and artistic worth are of age-old repute. The original home of these meticulously hand-woven carpets and rugs like the soft velvet and felt ones, seems to have been somewhere in that wide region stretching from the Near East to Sin-Kiang in Central Asia.

Historical facts show that smooth-surfaced carpets and tapestry were used as far back as 1,300 B.C. in Egypt and other parts of the Near East. The existence of the pile carpet called *katif* (an Arabic word) has been traced back to the 3rd century A.D. In the Old Testament, there are references to rich rugs and tapestry, unfolding the famous legend of King Solomon's huge carpet which could cover an area of sixty square miles. At the time the Greeks came in contact with Persian civilization, the manufacture of gorgeous rugs and carpets in the Valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris was already well-known to them. It was in appreciation of this very talent that Cyrus, on the occasion of his victorious entry into Mesopotamia, extended special privileges to the weavers of velvet fabrics, probably seen by him for the first time in his life. When the Saracens conquered Persia and Turkestan, these world-famous articles, particularly the pile carpets, came to be introduced on a large scale into the courts and palaces of the ruling princes and nobles of the time. One could thus well imagine how the stream of these centuries-old traditions in Persian and Turkish weaving-art travelled to India through waves of Islamic invasion, and thence on to Kashmir. Kashmir, it may be known, was already in the orbit of the famous carpet-producing centres of Kashgar, Herat, Bokhara and Samarqand.

Woollen carpets, particularly the pile-carpets, known as *Qalins* or *Ghalichas* used to be a novelty to the people of India and the Happy Valley. By the time Babar along with his cousin Mirza Haidar Dughlat, had planned

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी

the conquest of India and Kashmir, a steady demand for these Persian and Turkish carpets had already grown. Princes and princesses vied with one another in buying and treasuring the rarest and costliest of these carpet-pieces. Though exact dates are not known, it can be presumed that some attempts were made by weavers in Kashmir, as also in Delhi and Lahore, to produce both smooth-surfaced and piled woollen carpets. Abul Fazl mentions two state factories at Lahore and Agra set up by Akbar for the manufacture of finely designed carpets and rugs. The bright old carpets preserved till today in the Ashar Mahal at Bijapur date from 1657 A.D. and are reported to have come from Kashmir, thereby indicating that the carpet-weaving industry of Kashmir is of long standing.

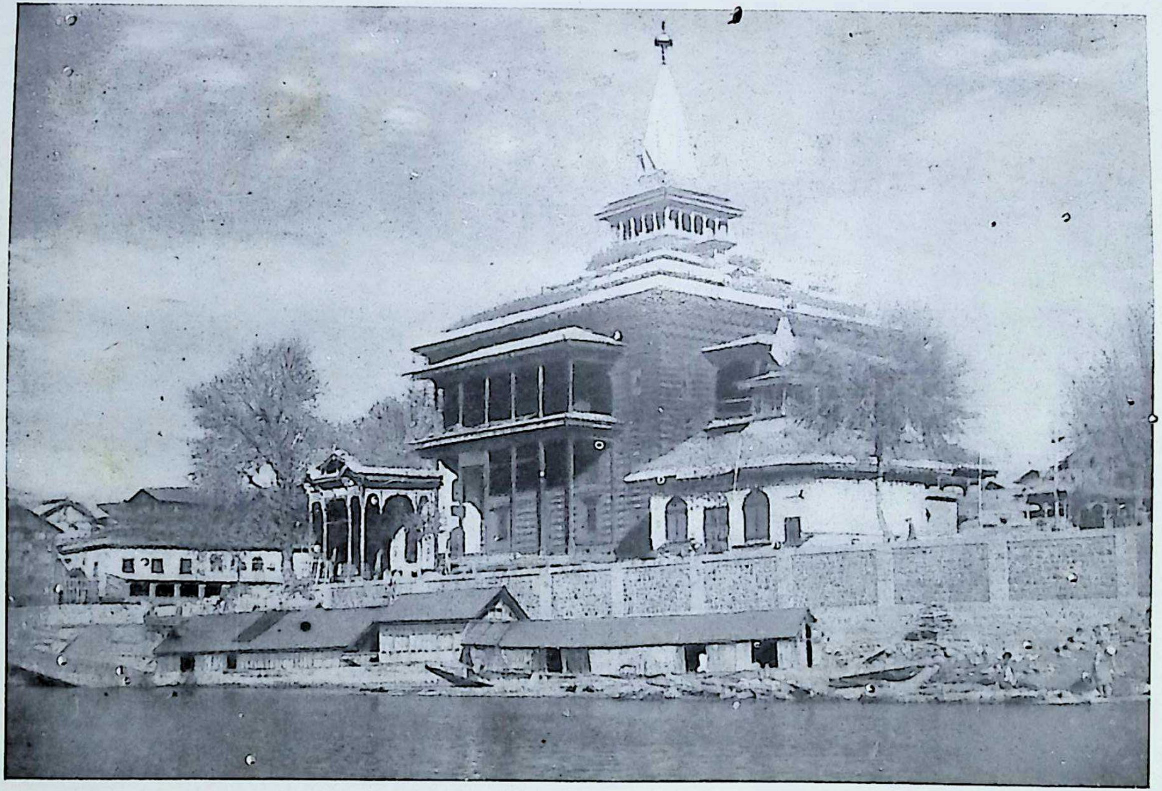
The manufacture of Kashmiri carpets, ever since the days of the Mughals, has been mostly adapted from and modelled on Persian types, though, of course, indigenous designs, too, were often used. The exotic pile-carpets particularly, though foreign in origin, have been so altered to local surroundings and infused with local motifs that they have come to stay as peculiarly Kashmiri. The composition of designs on these carpets range widely from the pictorial depiction of choice Assyrian and classical subjects to Iranian legends and romances, while the Central Asian influence is evident in the choice of the flora and fauna as also the selection of circles and geometrical figures. These Central Asian patterns consist generally of an arch at the top with geometrical lines forming the body of the pattern. The background is white, while the designs are woven in varying shades of black, red and yellow. Persian and other designs of Islamic origin are characterized by the familiar motif of the paradise-garden, strewn with bright hued flowers and blossoming trees; the repetition of romantic and legendary subjects; or hunting and chasing scenes—all copied from contemporary miniature paintings enclosed within large medallions or zig-zag borders. Even in these, however, the indigenous inspiration is reflected in the addition of mango-motifs or similar enclosures filled with rich flowers and foliage peculiar to the natural background.

New Subjects

As in designs and schemes, so in the use and selection of colours, Kashmiri carpets have undergone a considerable change. The natural and vegetable dyes, for instance, which were previously used and obtained from pomegranate, saffron and madder, have given place in more recent times to synthetic dyes. And, whereas previously, the initiative and originality of the *Nakash* determined the alteration in or addition to the design of every individual piece, with the passage of time Kashmiri carpets have come to acquire a more rigid and standard design. But with a revival of interest in the land's ancient folklore and legendary romances, new subjects have come to be woven into Kashmiri carpets, giving new impetus to the craft.

At the present time, the carpet-weaving industry is so popular in Kashmir that almost every rural family has a loom of its own. Five or six members of the family join together to set up a shed; and during the spare days of the winter, when hours drag long and work out-of-doors is impossible, they weave pieces of rare quality. Various materials are used for weaving the carpet, ranging from *Pashm* of the Tibetan goat, to the wool of the sheep and deer inhabiting the highlands of Kashmir itself.

To all their spheres of art and activity—indigenous or foreign-inspired—the Kashmiris have imparted a peculiar freshness and charm. There is colour, imagination, and vigour, in every kind and variety of Kashmir handicraft. It is no wonder, therefore, that Kashmir is known as the Happy Valley: happy in the blessings bestowed upon it by nature, and proud in the occupational crafts that it has cultivated after centuries of assimilation and evolution.



THE SHAH HAMDAN MOSQUE: "KHANQAH-E-MOALLA"

25

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

THE culture of Kashmir knows no limitations consequent to sectarianism. This land has been the scene of conflicting civilizations ever since the dawn of history. Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic influences penetrated here from early times. Yet the heritage of the Kashmiris has neither been exclusively Hindu nor purely Muslim. It is, in fact, an outgrowth of various influences and traditions.

Common social and cultural ties bind together the Kashmiri Hindus, the Kashmiri Buddhists and the Kashmiri Muslims. Reverence for spiritual teachers and holy men has always been a striking feature of Kashmiri life. And, in their zeal for earning social or religious merits, the Kashmiris have recognised no differences of caste or creed. Muslims enthusiastically pay their homage to Hindu religious men like *Sadhus* and *Sanyasis*, whilst Hindus reverently kiss the feet of Muslim *Aulias* and *Pirs*. Religious men are esteemed by all alike and enjoy a high social status. There are many shrines—memorials to such holy men of the past—which, to this day, are sacred to both the communities. Visits to such shrines or tombs once again go to show the common ideals and aspirations cherished by the Kashmiris.

Men and women flock to these common places of worship from near and far to pay their homage to the memory of the holy *Sadhus* or *Aulias*, considering it either as the most appropriate service to God or as a means of getting a wish fulfilled. Supernatural and miraculous powers are attributed to such places, and prayers are offered at these quarters.

A Typical Example

A typical example of this unity in the social and religious spheres may be seen reflected in the homage paid at the mosque of Shah Hamdan or the *Khanqah-i-Mualla*, on the river Jhelum, near the third bridge in Srinagar. This famous mosque is sacred to both Hindus and Muslims. It is said to have been built by Qutubuddin in 1373 A.D. in memory of Shah Hamdan, the famous saint from Persia. The mosque was built on the site of an old temple dedicated to goddess Kalishwari. Even to this day that temple is extant and there is a spring dedicated to the goddess within the precincts of the mosque. Hindus visit this shrine and hold it in as much reverence as do the Muslims.

The shrine of Ziarat Pir Haji, though comparatively less important, is another place of worship common alike both to the Hindus and to the Muslims of Kashmir. This shrine is considered to be the temple of Siddheshwari built by Pravarasena II. And the ruins thereof attract many Hindu devotees.

Great Religious Appeal

Between the fourth and the fifth bridges of the river Jhelum is the tomb of King Zain-ul-Abdin's mother which is held in high reverence both by Hindus and Muslims alike. Whenever there is any serious illness in a Hindu home, particularly small pox, a small piece of the masonry work from this tomb, usually a piece of brick, is brought and kept in the house, in the hope that the illness would thereby be cured.

Not only the mother but her royal son too commands the homage of the Kashmiris. For generations, grateful Hindus have regarded King Zain-ul-Abdin as the incarnation of Narayana and he is still revered as an ascetic. He was described as Shri Jainallabhadina, the Hinduised form of the name Zain-ul-Abdin.

In Zain-ul-Abdin was truly ingrained the spirit of love and toleration so manifest in contemporary life. He it was who persuaded Maulana Kabir, who had earlier migrated to Herat from Kashmir, to return home. Maulana Kabir was a master of theology and was given charge of an educational institution, Dar-ul-Ulum. The memory of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin is preserved by the famous *Zaina Kadal*, the fourth bridge over the Jhelum in the heart of the capital city—Srinagar. Other important buildings and townships, like Zainakot, Zainapura, Zainamarg and Zainagir, are a testimony to the affection in which he was held. Like the great Hindu king Asoka, he codified the laws of Kashmir for all classes of people and got them engraved in public places for the enlightenment of his subjects. The Sultan, according to Hindu legends, is also said to have taken a pious pilgrimage to the holy Hindu shrine of Amarnath, and was an occasional visitor to other holy places of the Hindus as well.

Fairs and Festivals

As in their beliefs and customs, so in the celebration of their fairs and festivals—religious or semi-religious—Kashmiris have evinced a common interest. Muslims participate in Hindu festivals and social functions with deep interest and show respect to the prescribed procedures. The same is true of Hindus who take as much pleasure in associating themselves with the festivities of the Muslims. On all such occasions, public gatherings are convened and learned discourses are delivered on the teachings of Hindu scriptures and Muslim religious teachings. Muslim festivals, like *Id* and *Shab-e-Barat*, are not merely occasions of worship for earning religious merit to the Muslims but also functions for inter-communal social intercourse. Similarly, the Hindu festivals, of *Holi* and *Diwali*, have a universally popular appeal. The chief attraction of the *Diwali* festival, no doubt, lies in the sumptuous feast of lights and illumination it provides to the people as a whole. Huts and hamlets, houses and palaces, are all lit up and resound with song and music.

Rites and Rituals

The same is true of the various rites and rituals, festivities and celebrations, which are associated with births, marriages and deaths. The folk-songs which are sung by the village women on these occasions are the same for all sections of the people. The Kashmiris, indeed, posess an immense wealth of common myths and traditions, customs and rituals, beliefs and legends. And when we probe deeper into the life of the Kashmiris in provincial towns and other rural areas, we find that their way of life is based on healthy notions and instincts.

There is no *purdah* system among Kashmiri women generally, and among the rural masses it is completely non-existent. Except on the wedding day, when the bride puts on a veil only as a symbol of maidenly modesty, women—Hindu or Muslim—live a free social life with their men-folk.

Similarity in Dress

As regards the various details of their dress—male or female—the same mingling of the two cultures is evident. The *Pheran*—which is an ample gown hanging in loose folds over the inner robe—is as popular with the Hindu women of Kashmir as with their Muslim sisters. At the time of marriage, it is customary for the Hindu and the Muslim brides to wear skull-caps worked beautifully in lace and embroidery. The *Taranga* or the head-dress a Hindu woman wears on this occasion is almost the same as the *Kasaba* worn by the Muslim woman, except that the former is more picturesque than the latter.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

In the sphere of the male attire of the Kashmiris, an interesting evolutionary study can be traced. The *Pustin* of the Kashmiris, which is an open sheep-skin coat descending to the hips or sometimes even to the ankles, and reveals an edge of fur round the neck, is Turkish in origin. It was universally adopted by the Buddhists of Central Asia and Ladakh, from where it has perhaps come down to the people of Kashmir as a winter dress.

The history of the various modes of costume in Kashmir today is a happy blending of heterogeneous elements. But, with the development of a common social outlook, the dress of an average educated Kashmiri has undergone much transformation. This transformation is common to men as well as to women and has helped to remove whatever little distinction there was in the past in the dresses of the Hindus and the Muslims.

Mystical sayings and legends which have come down through the ages are based on the fundamental unity of the life of the masses of Kashmir. The sayings of Laleshwari, affectionately called by the people of Kashmir as Granny Lalla, and those of Rupa Bhawani are extremely profound. They were both religious-minded and saintly in character. The wise sayings of Shaikh Nur-ud-Din of Tsrar Sharif are almost proverbial everywhere.

Religion, for the Kashmiris, is a personal affair. Though sacred, it has not alienated them from their cultural and historical traditions of the past. The fundamental unity of the Kashmiris finds a basis in their common likes and dislikes, common wants and desires, and common urges for growth and development.

26

BEYOND THE BORDERS

FOR centuries before Christ, the intellectual and spiritual greatness of India in general, and of Kashmir in particular, was renowned beyond its own eastern world. The famous university of ancient Kashmir was a fountainhead of knowledge from which went forth varied thought-currents to other parts of Asia. Here flourished various literary and cultural movements which in time became dynamic forces, influencing the culture and civilizations far, far away.

Kashmiri Pandits and scholars have been ever famous for their piety and scholarship. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, when he came to study in Kashmir (631-633 A.D.), was so impressed by the attainments of Kashmiri Pandits that his record of this visit is full of glowing tribute to their achievements. Speaking of the status of learning in Kashmir, the traveller says: "This country from remote times was distinguished for learning, and their priests were all of high religious merit and conspicuous virtue as well as marked talent and power of clear exposition of doctrine; and though the other priests, (i.e., of other nations), were in their own way distinguished, yet they could not be compared with these, so different were they from the ordinary class."

The Fountain of Knowledge

Hiuen-Tsang stayed in Kashmir for nearly two years drinking deep at the fountain of knowledge. He entered Kashmir by way of Baramulla along the Vitasta, or the Jhelum river. On nearing the capital, Srinagar, he was accorded a right royal reception by the reigning King, Durlabha Varman, who received him outside the walls of the city and extended to him princely honours. A sumptuous banquet was held in the palace. The Chinese pilgrim was accommodated at the famous "Jayendra Vihara" and the king provided him twenty scribes to copy the sacred manuscripts and scriptures and also deputed five men to wait on him and he was furnished, free of expense, whatever he required.

Hiuen-Tsang spent his time in studying the "*Sutras*" and "*Sastras*." He has left an authoritative account of his researches in theology and the sciences. His description of the Valley of the Jhelum makes interesting reading. Buddhism, according to Hiuen-Tsang, flourished in the land, though it was not the predominant religion of the place. There were, he says, "Buddhist monasteries, over 100 in number, and there were 5,000 Buddhist brethren ; and there were four Asoka *topes* each containing at its top a *Sheng* or pint of the bodily relics of the Buddha".

Prior to Hiuen-Tsang's, there are earlier Chinese records available, though neither detailed enough nor quite accurate. One such reference is dated 541 A.D. It describes the northern part of India as a country "enveloped on all sides like a precious jewel by the snowy mountains, with a valley in the south, which leads up to it and serves as the gate of the Kingdom."

Still another authoritative account, after Hieun-Tsang's visit to Kashmir, comes from the pen of Ou-K'ong who came to Kashmir in 759 A.D. and here took the vow of Buddhism. Ou-K'ong lived in the Valley for four years and wore the garb of a Buddhist *Bhikshu*, visiting holy places and shrines associated with Lord Buddha's name. He states that the number of Buddhist monasteries was more than three hundred, thereby showing that this religion was more prosperous at this time than in the preceeding centuries. Like Hiuen-Tsang, Ou-

K'ong too made an extensive study of Sanskrit works and Buddhist scriptures.

Indigenous System of Philosophy

Kashmir had by this time developed an indigenous system of philosophy. This was the *Trika* or the Shaivite philosophy, which received here a scientific form and devoted study. Shaivite philosophy, indeed, marked a distinct phase in the later-day development of Hindu philosophy. It gave rise to a distinct school of thought, which throve and reached perfection in Kashmir. Later, in the 8th century A.D., Vasu Gupta expounded the Shaivite teachings extensively. He also composed an authoritative treatise on the subject : the *Spanda-Karika*. A hundred years later, in the 9th century A.D., Kallat Bhatt wrote another treatise, namely the *Spanda Vriti*. Soma Nand further elaborated the system and explained its intricacies in *Shiva Drishti*. In the tenth century A.D., Upal Deva wrote some authoritative treatises which are still considered as the basis of the Monistic Shaivite Yoga philosophy of Kashmir.

But the greatest authority on Kashmir Shaivism was Abhinava Gupta, belonging to the 10th century A.D., who left many an imperishable work, of which *Tantraloka* is the most outstanding. Kshemendra, Kshema Raja and Yoga Raja are the three outstanding names in the history of Kashmir's Shaivism, who, besides elaborating the fundamentals of the system, were instrumental in spreading its philosophical message far and wide. Kashmir thus became the fountain-head of Shaivite philosophy, and scholars and philosophers came to its centres of learning from the rest of India to study the latest developments in Shaivism.

Great Teacher from the South

It was in quest of this very object that Shankara, the great Shaivite teacher from the south, travelled to Kashmir towards the end of the 9th century A.D. and preached his monistic doctrine from the famous "Gopa Hill", opposite the Dal Lake. This hill received a new name later—"Shankaracharya hill"—after this great teacher "Shankara", and the temple, which was built by King Gopaditya in the 4th century B.C., also became celebrated as the "Shankaracharya Temple" after this great religious teacher. Later, in the 11th century A.D., another great religious teacher of the south, Ramanuja, who was the head of the rival Vaishnavite sect, travelled to far off Kashmir to study the rich Shaivite literature at its fountain-head.

Rendezvous of the Orient

Thus it will be seen that Kashmir attracted scholars and saints from the earliest of times. But, influences of its culture and religion were not confined merely to the other parts of India alone. Situated as it was, Kashmir occupied a geographical position unique on the map of Asia. Bounded by Tibet in the East, Chinese Turkistan and what later became the Russian kingdom on the north, and Afghanistan on the west, Kashmir formed, as it still does, the meeting-ground of the different land-routes to the various parts of Asia. In those ancient days of its glory, when means of communication with the outside world were few and land routes formed the only link of commercial and cultural intercourse, Kashmir served as an important rendezvous of various races and ideas. Traders and travellers moving to and fro on this Himalayan highway carried in their train commercial commodities and spiritual ideas to the different parts of the Oriental world. Caravans of merchants crossed one another while trekking their way through the Valley from the highlands of Asia and China on the one hand, and the plains of India and Afghanistan on the other. Thus it was that Kashmir became the meeting-ground for Buddhists from Tibet and Mongolia, the Taoists from China and the far east, the Hindus from India, and Muslims from Afghanistan in the north-west.

All land-routes connecting the east and the west, as well as the various parts of the eastern world, as we saw, converged in Kashmir. Religious missionaries and pious pilgrims, political emissaries and official itinerants, all came and met here in common confluence and enriched the many-sided life of the people of the land.

The Third Great Assembly

Kashmir played an important role in the propagation of Buddhism to foreign lands. In fact, Buddhism originating in India, spread to Kashmir and from the latter to regions adjacent to its borders, particularly Central Asia, China and Tibet. In the time of Asoka, the first Buddhist missionary came to Kashmir to preach the message and doctrine of Buddha. Buddhism took hold in Kashmir and many a Buddhist temple and *Vihara* came to be built in the Valley.

Again, it was in the reign of Kanishka that Kashmir was chosen as the site for the Third Great Assembly or the *Mahasabha* of the Buddhists, which was attended by no less than 500 *Arhats*, 500 *Bodhi-Sattvas* and 500 Pandits, when a final reconciliation of the various conflicting opinions of the prevailing Buddhist schools of thought was attempted. According to Yuan-Chwang, the Chinese authority and contemporary of Kanishka, the Emperor got all the Buddhist treatises discussed at the Assembly and got them engraved on copper-plates, which were later enclosed in stone-boxes and deposited in a *Stūpa* built for this purpose. The Assembly also was responsible for the preparation of three authoritative volumes of Buddhism which had far-reaching effects on later-day Buddhist thought and philosophy.

BEYOND THE BORDERS

Greco-Buddhist Traditions

The extent of Kanishka's empire extended as far as the extreme north-west, including the principalities of Peshawar, Taxila and Gandhara. The Greco-Buddhist traditions of art and architecture, which are so obvious in the then contemporary Mathura School, also reached as far as the Kashmir Valley and influenced the artistic and cultural traditions of the land. The abundance in which the coins of the Indo-Greek and Saka Kings of north-western India have been found until recently in Kashmir indicates the existence of considerable commercial intercourse, as well as political connection, between the two even at the beginning of the Christian era. Scholars like Katyayaniputra, Asvaghosha, Visuddha-Simha, Jinbandhu, Suryadeva and others, flourished in Kashmir and added to its glory and lustre.

The extent to which the creed and principles of Buddhism evolved in Kashmir influenced the mode of life of the people in countries across its frontiers, may be judged by references to various aspects of its impact on their culture and civilization. The first Chinese contact with Indian Buddhism took place in the first century of the Christian era (about 67 A.D.), probably through the familiar land-route over Kashmir, Central Asia, and Khotan. In these places Buddhism left imperishable traces of its art and sculpture in the many memorable monasteries and shrines celebrated even to this day. During the next few centuries a still further expansion of the cultural contacts between China and Kashmir seems to have taken place. The services of the Buddhist priest Kumarjiva for the cause of learning in China during the time of the later Chin dynasty (384-417 A.D.), gained for him the title *Tungsheo*, which literally interpreted, means, "one who although young in years was ripe in wisdom and virtues of old age." He is referred to as "one of the four suns of Buddhism", and is credited with the invention of a new alphabet as well. Another familiar figure, believed to have settled down in China in this period, is Prince Gunavarman of Kashmir, who is credited with having painted a Jataka scene in Canton. The prince died in Nanking in 431 A.D.

Missionaries and Scholars

Following the example of these Kashmiri missionaries and scholars, many other Indian monks and scholars also visited China. Mention may be made of Bodhi-Dharma of South India, (529-536 A.D.), and Parmartha of Magadha (545 A.D.). They helped revive and spread the doctrines of the later-day Mahayana form of Buddhism in China.

As trade and traffic between China and Kashmir had existed since long, direct political relations also followed. An interesting reference to such diplomatic contacts is furnished by the annals of the T'ang dynasty of China. These mention "the arrival at the imperial court of the first embassy from Kashmir sent by King Tchen-t'o-lo-pi-li (circa 713 A.D.) and that of another embassy sent by his brother and successor, Mu-to-pi". The Kashmiri kings referred to have been identified as Chandrapida and Muktapida or Lalitaditya, as mentioned in the *Raj-Tarangini*. The T'ang accounts also mention the Mo-ho-to-mo-loung or Mahapadma Lake, the present Wular; Po-lo-ou-lo-po-lo, or Pravarapura, the old town of Srinagar; and Mi-na-si-to or the Vitasta river, the well-known Jhelum of to-day.

The Torch-Bearer

Kashmir also became instrumental in carrying the torch of learning and spiritual guidance to countries and colonies "beyond the seven seas", known as Further India in the olden days. It was in the middle of the 5th century A.D. that Prince Gunavarman of Kashmir, is said to have landed in Yavadwipa or Sumatra. First, he converted the Queen of this isle to the new creed, who in turn converted her son and declared Buddhism as the official religion of the entire Sumatra island which she governed.. Buddhist temples and *Viharas* grew up everywhere and indigenous rulers and priests began to vie with one another in dedicating their lives to the cause of Buddhist faith.

It was through Kashmir again that Buddhism spread from India to Tibet. But in the process of transmission, Buddhism was very much changed and transformed. In Kashmir, the later-day development in Buddhist thought and philosophy received a more elaborate study and attention, and the present-day Tantric practices in Tibetan Buddhism could undoubtedly be traced to this development.

But, spiritual ideas alone did not travel from Kashmir to Tibet, which owed, and still continues to owe, a heavy debt of gratitude to Kashmiri scholars and Pandits for having laid down the foundations of the latter's culture and civilization. It was in the 7th century A.D. that Buddhism was first introduced in Tibet—both from China and India. In his enthusiasm for the new religion, the Tibetan king, Srongbtsan-sgam-po (600-650 A.D.), is said to have invited Buddhist teachers and scholars from far and near, from China, Nepal, India and Kashmir. The Tibetan language was an oral language, without a written script or alphabet till then. The king, therefore, deputed his Minister, Thonmi-Sam-Bhota, along with his disciples to visit India to study Buddhist manuscripts as well as to learn the Indian alphabet. On his return, the minister invented the first Tibetan alphabet, based on models then prevalent in Kashmir. Thus it was that the Kashmiri alphabet came to be adopted as a model for the Tibetan script. Thonmi also wrote the first grammatical treatise in Tibetan, thus becoming the first grammarian of the Hidden Land.

When he returned, Thonmi took with him a number of scholars from India and Kashmir to help translate the works from Sanskrit. With their help and with the help of sixteen disciples, he then translated many a Sanskrit work and astronomical text into Tibetan. Amongst this galaxy of scholars, were included two Pandits from Kashmir—Tabuta and Ganuta, who gave the initial fillip to literature in the Tibetan language.

The Beacon-Light of Wisdom

For centuries in the past, Kashmir thus had been the beacon-light of wisdom and inspiration to the whole of Asia. Its scholars and missionaries were respected everywhere and accorded royal honours and courtesies. In medieval times, when, according to the Muslim historian Al-beruni, Kashmir closed its gates to foreigners for fear of aggression, it still extended shelter and refuge to all who sought it.

A succession of Brahmin and Buddhist scholars, to escape persecution, flowed into Kashmir from the rest of India and took shelter in its numerous shrines and temples—the seats of learning and culture. One such eminent scholar was Bilhana, the poet-laureate of King Vikramaditya VI (1075-1126 A.D.) of the kingdom of Kalyan in the south and the well-known author of the *Vikramanadeva Charita*. Bilhana represents a link in that chain of scholars and missionaries who found patronage and refuge in this "Land of Milk and Honey" and spread enlightenment to unknown destinations far away beyond the borders.

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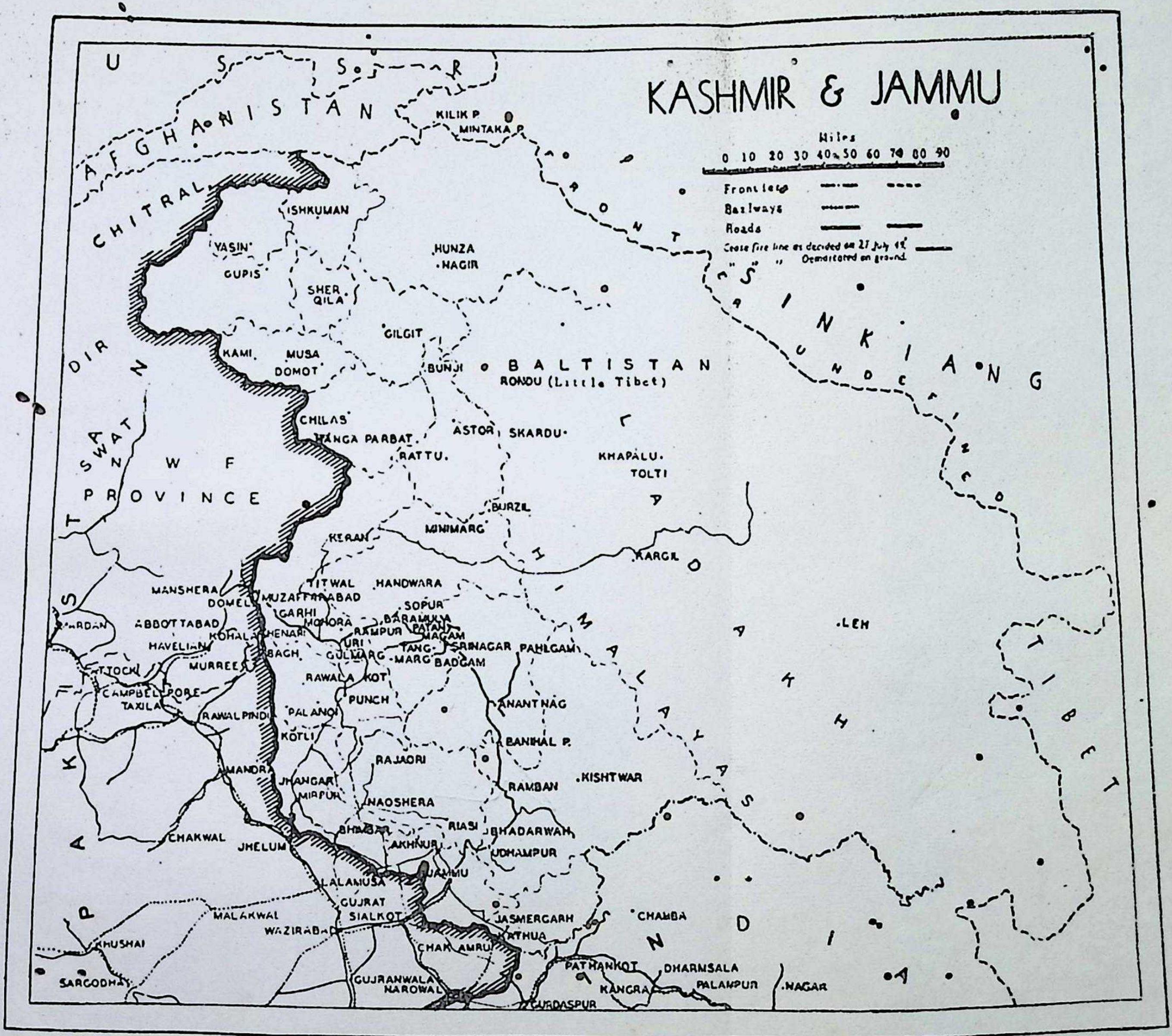
KASHMIR & JAMMU
Miles
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Frontiers
Railways
Roads
Cease fire line as decided on 27 July 49
" " Demarcated on ground.
U S S R
AFGHANISTAN
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MINTAKA P.
CHITRAL
ISHKUMAN
YASIN
GUPIS
HUNZA
NAGIR
SHER QILA
GILGIT
KAMI
MUSA DOMOT
BUNJI
BALTISTAN
RONDU (Little Tibet)
FRONTIER
SINKIANG
UNDEFINED
DIR
SWAT
N W F PROVINCE
CHILAS
NANGA PARBAT
ASTOR
SKARDU
RATTU
KHAPALU
TOLTI
LADAKH
BURZIL
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CHAK AMRU
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DHARMSALA
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PAKISTAN

A MAP OF KASHMIR AND JAMMU

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